

**Constructing the masculine: Discourses of masculinity as cooperation, competition, and  
conflict in *Men's Health* magazine**

by

Thomas James Golder

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Supervisors: Prof. Martin Terre Blanche

Mr. Melusi Mbatha

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## Declaration

Name: Thomas James Golder

Student Number: 4550 784 8

Degree: MA Psychology

“Constructing the masculine. Discourses of masculinity as cooperation, competition, and conflict in Men’s Health magazine”

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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21/07/2021

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DATE

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### Abstract

The aim of this study was to uncover how hegemonic masculinity is discursively produced within the text of *Men's Health South Africa*, and how discourses of competition, conflict and the use of role models function in relation to the masculinity found within the text. A qualitative approach utilizing discourse analysis of key excerpts through the lens of social constructionism, critical social theory and gender performativity was undertaken. The findings show that masculinity is produced within the text through various discourses such as the primacy of physical appearance and strength, and the qualities of leadership, fatherhood and mental fortitude, among others. In addition, the results show that the discourses and use of role models in the text may have a normative function in the regulation of the expression of hegemonic masculinity among the readers of *Men's Health South Africa* and others.

**Key terms:** Critical social theory; discourse analysis; gender performativity; hegemony; masculinity; social constructionism

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## Chapter One – Introduction

### Background

This study aimed to investigate how masculinity, specifically hegemonic masculinity, is discursively produced, sustained and resisted through discourses of competition and the use of role models within the texts of *Men's Health South Africa* magazine. This was accomplished through a discourse analysis of specific texts identified within the pages of *Men's Health South Africa*. The textual data was divided into themes, discourses and sub-discourses and then analysed against existing literature and theories, namely social constructionism, critical social theory and gender performativity.

Contemporary mass media can have a formative effect on how social behaviour is constructed and may influence interpersonal behaviours and how we view ourselves as individuals as compared to the discourses within the texts we consume. Men's lifestyle publications such as *Men's Health South Africa* could have a formative effect on how masculinity is enacted by its readership. This study aimed to discover through analysis of the text how masculinity is produced by *Men's Health South Africa* and if it perpetuates the hegemonic masculine status quo.

*Men's Health South Africa* has been an institution in the men's magazine space in South Africa since 1997 as reported by the *Mail and Guardian* (1997), and “with 25 print editions in 35 countries and more than 21 million readers across its social and digital platforms, Men's Health is the world's largest men's magazine brand, and the number one source of information for and about men”. The publication also claims that they are the de facto resource for “men who want greater control over their physical, mental, and emotional lives” (Editorial, 2019, n.p.).

## **Rationale**

Competitive and conflictual elements can play a part in the social construction of masculinity as explored in the literature review of this study, but what is not clear is how prominent a role they play in media texts or how they are woven in with other discursive elements in media depictions of masculinity. This study therefore aimed to critically evaluate the discursive role of media texts in the discourse of hegemonic masculinity in *Men's Health* magazine to discover how the discourses identified sustain or resist hegemonic masculinity or produce alternative discourses of masculinity.

## **Structure of the Dissertation**

This chapter introduces the study and provides an overview of the four other chapters comprising this dissertation. Chapter two reviews existing literature on the three theoretical underpinnings of the dissertation: social constructionism, critical social theory and gender performativity, and on core concepts discussed in the analysis. Social constructionism involves understanding social and psychological phenomena (such as masculinity or romantic love) as not having an essential and timeless reality, but as being created through the social mechanisms of culture and history. Critical social theory is an approach that foregrounds the power structures and taken-for-granted social practices and modalities that shape our understanding of the world. Gender performativity, a theory developed by Judith Butler (2011), claims that gender is not an inherent trait but is instead socially constructed through practices and behaviours specific to each gender role. The chapter investigates the concept of gender, and then moves on to topics of masculinity, how masculinity is defined, and the concept of the “New Man” that arose in response to feminist activism. The latter parts of the chapter includes an investigation into competition - in the contexts of sport and the trait of competitiveness, role models and the role of media in constructing masculinity.

The third chapter of the study describes the methodology utilised and the analysis of the text found in *Men's Health South Africa*. Discourse analysis is the chosen method to address the research questions of this study. The research questions are stated, and the method is described in addition to issues of reliability, validity and data collection, with specific reference to deviant case analysis and reflexive observations by the researcher.

Chapter four, the analysis chapter, is divided into three parts. Part one investigates the text for discourses of prescriptive masculinity that may influence the reader to enact a particular brand of masculinity. The second part considers discourses of role models – who they are, how they are chosen and what effect they may have on the reader. The final part of the analysis chapter investigates a deviant case, which contains discourses that differ from the majority identified within *Men's Health South Africa*. Finally, the study concludes in chapter five with an overview of the limitations of the analysis and recommendations for future studies.

## **Chapter Two - Literature Review and Theoretical Overview**

This chapter introduces the theoretical underpinnings of the study, namely social constructionism, critical social theory and gender performativity then moves to an overview of the key concepts related to masculinity. A review of discourse analytic work that has drawn on these concepts is then conducted. Key concepts are discussed, including gender, gender roles and the associated gender-role conflict that can arise, after which masculinity and the concept of hegemony and hegemonic masculinity is explored. The chapter then moves into a review of competition, conflict, the use of role models and the role of media. The media portrays many different individuals who can act as role models presenting certain modalities of being to their audiences. These ways of being can perpetuate discourse and behaviours in conflict and competition which are avenues through which hegemonic masculinity may be expressed.

### **Theoretical Background**

The theoretical and methodological outlook of this study was guided by social constructionism, critical social theory and a feminist theory of gender performativity. In this section, the concept of social constructionism is first addressed, where knowledge is seen as being constructed socially through a cultural and historical framework. This is followed by critical social theory, an approach that critically interrogates taken-for-granted practices and ways of understanding the world. Finally, the theory of gender performativity is investigated, which is seen as everyday actions that manufacture the illusion of gender.

### ***Social Constructionism***

Social constructionism is composed of the following tenets: it takes a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge, in that it encourages one to critically evaluate conventional knowledge and challenge everyday assumptions. According to Burr (2006)

social constructionism challenges one to be critical of the idea that observation produces an unbiased view of the world and the conventional knowledge on which it is based. It posits that specific knowledge is grounded in a historical and cultural framework, the way that one commonly understands the world. Concepts and categories that we use are culturally and historically specific. Different ways of understanding are unique and specific to each culture and time in history. This knowledge is seen as a product of that culture and history and is dependent on the particular social and economic environment at that time. That knowledge is constructed between people via the social processes that occur daily as people interact with one another. It is in these interactions that our version of knowledge becomes fabricated. This knowledge is therefore not a product of the scientific method – objective observation of the world, but rather of the social processes and interactions in which people are constantly engaged. These negotiated understandings could take on many different forms or constructions and each construction invites a different kind of action. More common or dominant social constructions bring about or sustain different patterns of social behaviour and some do so to the exclusion of other constructions (Burr, 2006).

As an example, a social constructionist would view one's personality as not only arising from fundamental traits or biological causes, but, also, through the diverse interactions had with the many different people in their lives. How one interacts and the kind of relationship they have with certain individuals is a product of the unique social interaction between them. Interactions with a different person would yield a different self. The nature of the self is thus culturally and historically bound to the social context in which it occurs (Burr, 2006).

### ***Critical Social Theory***

A critical approach may include an interrogation of the forms of surveillance and self-regulation that occur in everyday life and how our behaviours contribute to sustaining the

status quo. This exploration of everyday ordinary structures provides a basis for resistance to contemporary cultural practices and behaviours (Parker, 2002). Critical approaches to any point of contention is a project that seeks to name the questions rather than provide concrete answers. It is an attempt to speak about how a subject is understood in relation to one's self and others and how this impacts the wider culture or society (Fox et al., 1997). Critical theory is a participatory approach that engages relevant stakeholders and encourages a critical, reflective reassessment of social, economic or political systems and everyday lived practices (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010).

Critical social theory is a theoretical outlook framed by the goal of challenging society to change by critically evaluating how history and society are currently understood within entrenched patterns of power that construct our society (Dant, 2003). The critique critical social theory makes is, how the social world has been understood in the past is the reason that it is the way it is currently formed. This historically based understanding causes us to view this knowledge as the only truth there is. Particular circumstances or histories create particular knowledge, and this knowledge tends to obscure the lived experiences that this period's historical knowledge engenders (Dant, 2003). The knowledge that is created by oppressive systems becomes so embedded in common practice that it distorts and misrepresents our everyday lived experiences and desires (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010).

This critique is meant to bring awareness of the issue at an individual level to create change. Dant (2003) explains that to bring about social change requires changing people from within and that social transformation will only happen once the way in which we understand our society and its functioning changes.

A society's culture is understood not simply as the products of art or literature but the way in which people experience their day-to-day lives. Critical theory seeks to understand this culture and seeks the means to change it. Societal systems like capitalism produce

knowledge in ways that obscure their oppressive consequences. Practices, attitudes and arrangements that are unjust do not seem so to the casual observer as these practices become obscured over time within specific cultural activities or concepts (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010).

The solution of critical social theory is to understand society and to think about it differently; this critique creates the change that is desired from within. It does not seek a top-down structural change but a praxis – knowledge in action, born from the understanding of the mechanics of society that is critically reflective of people's roles and everyday practices (Dant, 2003; Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010).

An example of how critical social theory has been applied is Paulo Freire's theory on education. He favoured a humanising pedagogy where a relationship is formed between the educator and student. Through presenting problem exercises they jointly unveil the effects society has had on the formation of their current realities so that one can overcome it and co-create new configurations for themselves. Practically this would lead to social inclusion and active involvement of the learner in the learning process (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010).

### ***Gender Performativity***

Butler's (2011) theory of gender performativity posits that gender is not a fixed concept but rather it is performatively produced and regulated by the dominant discourses of gender. Butler asserts that a person does not inherently have a 'gender' but is a 'doer' of the concept of gender. Gender is fabricated by society through scripted acts, gestures, and enactments, which create an illusion of an interior and organising gender identity. This illusion is maintained in order to perpetuate the dominant discourses of a heteronormative society.



The body, its various contours and characteristics, is seen as a taken-for-granted surface upon which gender norms are inscribed. These markings seek to establish a specific coherent code of cultural significance. Any discourse that establishes the boundaries of the body serves the purpose of creating and normalising taboos and limits on the body that is deemed appropriate for that specific culture. This includes ways of being such as appropriate limits, postures, dress, mannerisms and sexual orientation (Butler, 2011).

When there is a critical resistance to the established way of understanding bodies, such as the transsexual movement, gender is exposed as a regulatory fiction. This resistance disrupts the coherence of the rhetoric of heterosexual discourse as the norm - it loses its descriptive force. This regulatory ideal is exposed as a societal norm – a fiction that disguises itself as a developmental law regulating the sexual expression of those it purports to describe. Those who resist this fiction are seen as ‘polluting’ persons and are shunned by society (Butler, 2011).

Butler (2011) believes that gender itself has no ontological status separate from the various acts which constitute its reality. Words, acts, gestures and desire produce an illusion of an internal core of gender identity; these acts are performative in that the identity that they suggest is rather created through corporeal signs and other discursive means and is not due to an inherent gender identity. The purpose of this performance is to regulate sexuality within the normative framework of reproductive heterosexuality. Gender can be seen as having three distinct dimensions: anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance.

It can also be seen as a strategy of cultural survival, as punitive action is taken against those who fail to “do their gender right” as evidenced by the persecution faced by minority groups such as LGBTQ+ (Butler, 2011). As Butler (2011, p. 178) succinctly states “the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all”. Gender obscures its origin; the tacit agreement to perform, produce and sustain

a discrete and polar gender duality is a cultural fiction sustained by the perceived credibility of these productions and the punishment of not agreeing to believe in them. The fiction compels our belief in and adherence to it and its 'naturalness'.

The action of gender requires a performance that is repeated, the repetition reinforces and re-establishes the set of meanings embedded in the discourse of gender. This legitimises and makes the performance of gender mundane (Butler, 2011).

### **Key concepts**

#### ***Gender***

There was an increased interest in the study of gender that occurred around the time of women's emancipation in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which identified the "problem of women". Research tended to focus on sex differences, which attempted to describe how women were inherently inferior to men (Carrigan et al., 1985). The gender role framework, that arose from this research, was used to examine what the social differences were between men and women and how these roles contributed to the formation of masculine and feminine identities. Later studies came to the consensus that sexual differentiation is a social phenomenon and that gender roles are learnt, acquired and internalised from our social interactions with others (Carrigan et al., 1985).

#### ***Gender roles***

Gender roles can be defined as "behaviours, expectations, and role sets defined by society as masculine or feminine which are embodied in the behaviour of the individual man or woman and culturally regarded as appropriate to males or females" (O'Neil, 1981, p. 203). Roles are seen as a key component in structuring social interactions; in conjunction with norms, they prescribe behaviour between those of different sexes, ages, and social status. When normative role behaviour becomes too rigid it can lead to the creation of stereotypes

with associated negative discourses (Lindsey, 2015). Many discourses sustain the dominant expressions of the masculine gender. As Davis (2002) discovered in his study on young college men, many of whom have internalised various negative discourses of masculinity, the expression of pain or emotional anguish is highly regulated, with comments such as "take it like a man" suppressing the self-expression of men. Further reinforcing this discourse is an overarching fear of femininity and that other men may view one's behaviour as homosexual or feminine. The men in the study wanted to give voice to certain emotions but were highly aware of the parameters within which these emotions may be expressed. Participants in the study felt more at ease communicating with women, as long as these women were not viewed as potential partners – where dominant discourses of maleness would influence the interaction (Davis, 2002). Interestingly men seem to regulate the behaviour and self-expression of other men as the participants felt in conflict between behaviours, such as self-expression, and the fear of others perceiving that behaviour. This is so much so that people accept scripted gender roles, either blindly or due to social pressure. It follows that their gender identity is socially constructed.

Despite gender being socially constructed, men are often blind to gender. Gender blindness as discussed in Davis (2002) is an important construct to consider as it influences the awareness men have of their privileged position; privilege and inequality are typically least visible and least understood by those who are most privileged by it. When one does not self-identify with their assigned gender role, gender role conflict may occur.

### ***Gender-role conflict***

Gender role conflict is "a psychological state occurring when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles learned through socialisation, result in the personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of others or the self" (O'Neil, 1981, p. 203). O'Neil (1981) identifies a construction of masculinity in which various expressions of masculinity, namely, masculine

power, dominance, competition, and control, are essential to proving one's masculinity and that men are biologically superior to women, or rather, that masculinity is the superior gender identity. (Lindsey, 2015; O'neil, 2008; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991)

### ***Masculinity***

Masculinity can be defined as “a configuration of practice organised in relation to the structure of gender relations” (Blazina, 2001; Connell, 2005; Crawshaw, 2007). According to Schneider (2008), South Africa was traditionally a “man's country” where discriminatory laws normalised patriarchal practices. However, status and power did not extend to all men equally. Political and social marginalisation of black men resulted in their “emasculatation” and white men were therefore afforded greater power. Despite the social movement of acknowledging those previously disadvantaged through processes such as affirmative action, men remain the primary decision-makers and generators of familial income. This does not mean that all men have been unwilling to adopt the goals of gender transformation. This acceptance of transformation has been expressed in the ideals of the “new man” (Schneider et al., 2008).

The “new man” or men against sexism is a phenomenon where men have decided, or have been encouraged, to embrace their more “feminine” side - which itself a social construction. This has included taking on a more nurturing, gentler role, especially in the context of child-rearing (Nixon, 2001; Segal, 1993). The “new man” arose from a combination of sociological factors, from the rise of feminism holding men accountable, to a rise in popular psychology concepts such as humanist psychology theories of self-actualisation and embodying the “whole-person” with a resistance towards behaviour viewed as “toxic-masculinity” (Gill, 2003). Anti-sexist men tend to be men whose social standing and lifestyles allow them to behave against the norm. This transition to a more androgynous form of masculinity, where men enjoy fatherhood and intimacy with women and other men,

is not a relinquishing of power or privilege (Segal, 1993). But through movements such as feminism, it has encouraged men to closely question their unthinking presumptions and unexamined prerogatives of masculinity (Segal, 1993).

### ***Hegemony***

The concept of hegemony was first described by Gramsci (2007) and is the maintenance of social power by certain groups, through persuasion and other means - those in power legitimise their actions by framing them as morally correct. Interestingly hegemony maintains power through consent rather than coercion and, as a result, the structure of society seems natural, inevitable and ordinary. Gramsci's theory of hegemony has been applied to a range of topics from an exploration of the relationship between Marxism and traditional psychological practices (see Mather (2003)) to more sociologically focused topics such as the interaction between the politics of history and memory (Molden 2016), to understanding developments in modern civil society (Maglaras, 2013). This study will focus on Connell's interpretation of hegemonic masculinity.

**Hegemonic Masculinity.** According to Connell (2005) the act of "being a man" involves engaging with the concept of hegemonic masculinity and negotiating one's position in relation to it. How a man's identity is constructed depends on how that man takes on either a complicit or resistant stance towards hegemonic masculinity. Connell (2005, p. 76) defines hegemonic masculinity as: "the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life. At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exulted." It is understood as a pattern of practice that enables men's dominance over women to continue (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The typical masculine character is not given for every culture or society but is rather a range of possible expressions of personae or ways of being that emerge from different gender regimes across cultures and historical periods. Among these different ways of being masculine, some become ascendant

and these emerge as the dominant styles of hegemonic masculinity with which men must engage. Hegemonic masculinity can be further defined as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 2005, p. 77). Hegemony preserves, legitimises and makes natural the interests of the powerful, disregarding and even marginalising other groups. Hegemonic masculinity is a way of being that not only marginalises women but other alternate forms of masculinity; it also constructs homosexuality as other, which results in its repression (Connell, 2005).

Wetherell and Edley (1999) investigated how men discursively position themselves in relation to the conventional representation of hegemonic masculinity. They identify three psycho-discursive practices in which men construct themselves as masculine. The first is the heroic position, which is the conventional masculine ideal where the man is courageous, physically tough and is able to “keep his cool” under pressure. The second is the ordinary position, where men separate themselves from the conventional social stereotype of what is masculine, such as “macho”, and emphasise their normality or ordinariness. Finally, the rebellious position is where men also reject social stereotypes such as macho as well as defining themselves in terms of their unconventionality, embracing non-conformity and flouting social expectations. These typical discursive paths that men take in negotiating their positioning align with the fact that most men can never personally embody hegemonic masculinity, but rather are supportive of it and regulated by it, and use it to judge the conduct of other men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). While most men do not live up to this hegemonic type, they do nevertheless benefit from its existence and are complicit in sustaining it (Speer, 2001).

Only a minority of men will enact hegemonic masculinity, but its influence is normative. Most men can be considered to have complicit masculinity. Those who benefit

from the patriarchy do not enact a typically strong version of masculine dominance, but along with compliant heterosexual women enable hegemony, and allow it to be the powerful force in society that it is (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell (2005) explains that the exemplars of hegemonic masculinity are not necessarily the most powerful individuals; they could be actors, fictional characters, individual holders of institutional power and those with great wealth. Hegemonic masculinity has been found to be resistant to change. Connell (2005) states that when the dominant form of patriarchy is challenged and the base of a particular form of masculinity is eroded, a new group of masculinities may arise that construct a new hegemony.

Demetrio (2001) characterises hegemonic masculinity on two levels, external and internal. External hegemony is the effect that hegemony has on others, such as the institutionalisation of men's dominance over women, whereas internal hegemony refers to how one group's way of being masculine is seen as ascendant over any other group of men's ways of being. While internal hegemony exists in tension with other non-hegemonic masculinities, non-hegemonic masculinities have a very limited impact upon it. Internal hegemony does however appropriate traits from other masculinities if those traits appear to be useful to perpetuate the domination of lesser groups. This hybridity of weaving together multiple patterns of masculinity results in a process where internal hegemony is constantly in a state of negotiation, translation and reconfiguration, all to find the best possible strategy for both internal and external hegemony.

Connell (2005) refers to three different localities of hegemonic masculinity, namely local, regional and global. Local hegemony is where masculinity is constructed at the interpersonal level, within families, organisations and communities. Regional hegemony is constructed at the cultural and nation-state levels, commonly found in political discourse.

Global hegemony is constructed on the transnational level, in domains such as world politics, international business and media.

Hegemonic masculinity at the regional level is symbolically represented through the interaction of unique masculine practices at the local level that has a greater regional reach, such as the masculinities enacted by celebrities, professional athletes, and politicians (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Regional masculinity provides a cultural framework that is enacted in daily practices and interactions at the local level as it shapes a society-wide sense of what is masculine (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Sometimes the most effective way of being a man is to distance oneself from the regional hegemonic masculinity. Men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable but can strategically distance themselves as the need arises. Thus, masculinity is not necessarily a type of man but rather a way in which men discursively position themselves in relation to hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

### ***Competition***

**Sport.** Sport is one of the predominant avenues for the expression of hegemonic masculinity. According to Bryson (1987) and Pringle (2005), most athletes enjoy the ability to express their power, and the competitive nature of sporting careers encourages the formation and idolisation of masculine identities based on the qualities of physical power, strength, discipline and willingness to endure physical pain and injury.

A key characteristic of (especially male-dominated) sport is the culturally exulted act of the joining of maleness with highly valued and visible skills with the positively sanctioned use of aggression, force, and violence. This linking is made through the types of sport that are popular. In the South African context, rugby, cricket and soccer are some of the most popular male dominated sports, as is the celebration of men's sport in the public arena. Sporting



events have a ritualistic form which strengthens hegemony and male solidarity, not just of teams but of male individuals in general (Bryson, 1987).

According to Bryson (1987), the consequence of focusing on and promoting male solidarity creates a process of exclusion which provides support for negative male attitudes towards women and marginalised groups' abilities. The pervasiveness of these attitudes leads these groups to accept that men are more capable than they are. The relative unpopularity of women's sport is illustrative of this, with women believed to be intrinsically less able to produce impressive feats of strength or skill. Another argument to be made is that sporting events are not inherently interesting but are made so via cinematography and commentary.

Pringle (2005) draws attention to the fact that in Western cultures sport is both highly representative of the interests and is mainly influenced by heterosexual men; and can be seen as an institution ideologically supportive of this group. There is an inherent link between the culture of sport and mass media, consumerism and big business as media has an economic interest in the reporting on and broadcasting of sporting events and news.

The motivational factor that drives activities such as sport can be considered to be competitiveness.

### ***Competitiveness***

Men are culturally positioned as liking challenges and a challenge is more likely to improve their performance. According to research done by Conti et al. (2001), men and boys are more likely to feel positively challenged by extrinsic pressure.

This can be attributed to the socialisation of these boys in traditional sex roles to value competition. Boys thus tend to be more competitive than girls and feel more comfortable in competitive scenarios. Research has shown that people will exhibit more stereotypical gender roles when interacting with those of the same gender (Alagna, 1982; Conti et al., 2001). This

behaviour is consistent with the aforementioned research which showed that the boys in the study had significantly increased enjoyment and produced a better product when interacting with other boys exclusively.

This suggests that masculinity plays an important role in determining the male response to competition, that there is higher intrinsic motivation when competing in same-sex groups. This may be due to the social pressure of their peers and wanting to appear masculine to other men (Conti et al., 2001). Self-perception of masculinity may also positively influence performance in a competitive environment, with individuals having a stronger sense of masculinity, being more optimistic about their ability in a competition or tournament (Alagna, 1982; Conti et al., 2001; Seminar, 2005).

Van Vugt et al. (2007) investigated gender differences in intergroup competition. Their study showed that men contributed more to the success of their group if their group was competing with others. Female cooperation in comparison was unaffected by intergroup competition; despite this, women contributed more to their groups over the entire course of the study. The results aligned with the male-warrior hypothesis, which posits that men's social behaviour and psychology are more strongly influenced by intergroup competition than women's (Van Vugt et al., 2007).

Niederle and Vesterlund (2007) investigated the preference of men and women, of equal ability, for entering into a competitive environment. The study discovered that men were twice as likely to enter a competition than women. Niederle and Vesterlund attributed the gender gap to men being overconfident in their ability to perform and gender differences in preference for competition.

Another key area of concern with regard to how masculinity is enacted is conflict.

## ***Conflict***

**Conflict and the constructions of violent masculinity.** Discourses of conflict in Western society focus on the construction of the man who perpetrates violence as heroic. The heroic man exemplifies some of the key characteristics of masculinity, namely: courageous, physically tough and able to “keep one’s cool”. Whitehead (2005) identified that masculinity is a dynamic risk factor that influences interpersonal conflict and competition, namely violence, between men. Masculinity is equated with dominance, strength, control and authority, and through violence, men are able to prove their masculinity as a form of control over themselves and their opponents. The soldier is seen as a paragon of this heroic masculinity, representing qualities of aggression, strength, courage and endurance. Faced with the pressure of this discourse, often the only option for men when encountering a threat, danger and conflict is violence (Anderson, 2008; T. J. van Niekerk & Boonzaier, 2016; Whitehead, 2005) – either in the form of direct physical aggression or as more indirect ways of “besting” one’s opponent.

Conflict and competition become essential discourses in sustaining masculinity and one’s sense of being a man; when faced with a threat, violence becomes a means of sustaining a masculine identity (Whitehead, 2005). Interpersonal violence can take the form of inclusive violence, where conflict is used to affirm the perpetrator’s masculinity through a display of courage against the other man, or exclusive violence where, through violence, the victim is humiliated and positioned as feminine, affirming the attacker’s position as heroic (Whitehead, 2005).

Commonly, violence is perceived as an available method of expressing and validating one’s masculinity. Western societal discourses equate masculinity with dominance, and being a man entails being strong, authoritative and in control. Men see fighting and using violent behaviour as validating these internalised discourses, as in a fight they can control both

themselves and their opponents. Even in losing a fight, having engaged in combat is seen as proof of the ability to control pain and a feat of endurance (Anderson, 2008; Unterhalter, 2000).

South Africa is characterised by an uncommonly high prevalence of injuries, which is driven by high levels of violence in the country – some of the most affected groups are boy, young men and women. Violence is driven by a variety of factors, including widespread poverty, high unemployment rates, income inequality, exposure to abuse in childhood, access to firearms, alcohol misuse, ineffective policing and culturally ingrained patriarchal notions of masculinity that celebrate toughness and risk-taking (A. van Niekerk et al., 2015). The discourse of male domination and superiority is constructed through the assumptions of male entitlement and power. As a consequence, in certain situations, violence is permissible or even expected, because anger and violence are seen as unchangeable characteristics of masculinity (T. J. van Niekerk & Boonzaier, 2016).

The male-warrior hypothesis is the notion that men's social behaviour and psychology are more strongly intergroup driven than women. Men make more competitive choices in social dilemmas between groups than women do (Van Vugt et al., 2007). Male competition includes direct physical and status competition, as well as competition for resources (Kruger & Nesse, 2007). Intergroup conflict and rivalries are a key characteristic of society, which in modern times are expressed in wars, civil conflicts, gang rivalries and competitive team sports (Van Vugt et al., 2007).

Conflict and competition are key areas where hegemonic masculinity can be expressed. Another issue to consider is the influencing effect that role models and people in positions of power, social or otherwise, can have in creating and maintaining a particular kind of masculinity.

### ***Role Model***

**Influencing the desired self.** Individuals who have achieved much in their lives can serve as role models to others, inspiring and motivating them. Celebrities, of any kind, can inspire and motivate others which can lead to self-enhancement (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997).

A celebrity will become a source of inspiration if one compares oneself to them, in that this person is deemed relevant to one's potential self. Similarities deemed between people are most likely when there are features, structure and purpose in common, and this leads to a social comparison where one maps the self onto the other (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). When an outstanding individual is both relevant and psychologically close to the self, a social comparison will take place. The consequences on the self will depend on the perceived attainability of the outstanding individual's success. If the success seems attainable one will be inspired, as the individual showcases the heights of accomplishment one can achieve and encourages and motivates the self to strive for this success. However, if the achievements of the outstanding individual seem unattainable, the self could become discouraged and demoralised (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997).

The view of the self-incorporates more than one's current abilities but also possible future selves. Outstanding individuals or celebrities can have such a strong influence in the shaping of our self-images. This guiding influence on the future self, aspirations and satisfaction, may be even more important to well-being than the current conception of the self, as one has a goal towards which to work (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997).

Individuals tend to pursue two kinds of goals, promotion and prevention goals. Promotion goals entail striving to achieve the ideal self, whereas prevention goals are the avoidance of negative outcomes to the self (Lockwood et al., 2002). When people are driven by promotional goals, they look for information that will be relevant for the pursuit of their success and are especially likely to notice and recall information relating to the pursuit of

success by others. These role models exemplify the positive outcomes desired by the self, and they inspire, promote and encourage the pursuit of success (Lockwood et al., 2002). Negative role models associated with prevention goals boost motivation by illustrating key strategies for avoiding failure; they personify unwanted feared selves and highlight ways of preventing such selves from occurring (Lockwood et al., 2002).

As discussed, role models play an integral role in exemplifying behaviours for others to reproduce. Role models reach their audience through various media channels.

### ***Media***

**Media and Masculinity.** We use media as an aid to construct meaning of political and social issues (Gamson et al., 1992). Gamson et al. (1992) conclude that media constructs a reality that promotes the political and social agendas of those who own the means of producing the media. The discourses in the media are hegemonic in nature, but social constructions rarely appear as such to the reader and may be largely unconscious on the part of the journalist or content producers. The meanings appear as transparent descriptions of reality, not as interpretations, and are therefore seemingly devoid of political content or agenda (Gamson et al., 1992). However, media are open to interpretation by the consumer and provide a many-voiced, open text that can also be read oppositionally. The undetermined nature of media discourse allows for opposition to the message, sparking social movements to offer alternative constructions of reality. These movements inspire people to go beyond the imagery portrayed in the media and lead them to construct their own discourses (Gamson et al., 1992).

Among other means, masculinity is socially constructed and imagined through the media. The media is a primary constructor of masculinity with its daily construction and representation of maleness and male bodies (Boni, 2002). Consumer culture has had a dominant effect on the representation of masculinity in men's magazines, where men's bodies

are represented as objects for men's attention and suitable objects for increased awareness of issues such as health, fitness, appearance and sexuality. Further to this, the concept of masculinity has become a globally perpetuated discourse through men's magazines, with the discourse being tailored to the unique markets in which the media is consumed.

There are many representations of masculinity in the media, some of which will be discussed below: muscular, metrosexual, laddist and black masculinities.

According to Wamsley (1999), muscular masculinity has varied in its importance over time. Muscular masculinity has discursively positioned the necessity of muscles as stemming from the historic functionality of strength as essential to livelihood, which consisted of activities such as farming and physical transportation of goods. In modern society, where most work is not labour intensive, there has been an increase in popularity of gym-going with the aim of increasing one's fitness and musculature (Pope et al., 2002). Arguably, muscular masculinity is popular as it offers compensation for feelings of inferiority due to the increase in the status of women - as a result of the feminist movement (Wienke, 1998). Muscles serve as a physical means to separate men from women and from other lesser men and thus symbolise a discourse of power (Cafri & Thompson, 2007). The desire and pursuit of a muscular physique is closely tied to a cultural discourse of the male gender role, which describes men as powerful, strong, efficacious, physically fit, and athletically successful. In addition, the muscular ideal describes the social standard of sexual attractiveness for men (Cafri & Thompson, 2007).

Metrosexuality first appeared in the 1970s and is characterised by its attempts to form non-oppressive relationships with women, children and other men (MacKinnon, 2003). Segal (1993) says that metrosexuality is grounded in self-presentation, appearance, and grooming, which provides an alternative way in which men can express themselves compared to traditional masculinity.

Laddism is characterized by the following: objectification of women, sexual conquest, bachelorhood, consumerism and youthfulness (Attwood, 2005; Jackson et al., 1999).

Laddism can be seen as a response to emerging movements that threaten traditional masculinity, such as feminism and metrosexuality (Nixon, 2001).

The black male is traditionally constructed in media as oversexed, incompetent, irresponsible and a threat to white constructions of the nation, womanhood and family (Gray, 1995). Traditional constructions of black masculinity in media, sustain hegemonic discourses of white masculinity by constructing white masculinity as the ideal, silencing alternative discourses of black masculinity. Muscular masculinity and laddist masculinity overtly sustain the agenda of hegemonic masculinity whereas metrosexuality both disrupts and sustains hegemonic discourses.

Previous studies have investigated the many forms of masculinity in print media. Ricciardelli, Clow, and White (2010) consider how different representations of masculinity were portrayed in eight Canadian publications. Their findings were that each publication tended to target a specific type of masculinity, but the discourse of hegemonic masculinity was woven throughout the different magazines (Ricciardelli et al., 2010). Interestingly, metrosexuality was the most common form of masculinity represented, with muscular and laddist representations restricted to specific lifestyle publications such as *Men's Health* or *FHM* (Ricciardelli et al., 2010). Ricciardelli et al. (2010) observed that metrosexuality and laddism were not alternatives to hegemonic masculinity but a different way in which it is expressed.

Vigorito and Curry (1998) investigated male gender roles in different magazines. They found that occupational portrayals of men are more likely to be found in publications with a high male audience; conversely, nurturing portrayals of men are most likely to appear



in publications read by women. Vigorito and Curry's (1998) finding suggest that women have a different expectation of men than they have of themselves.

Stibbe (2004) critically analysed *Men's Health* magazine to identify the ideological assumptions underpinning the discourse of the publication. He shows that while presenting health advice, *Men's Health* writers deliver it in a way that produces a type of hegemonic masculinity associated with destructive health behaviours. Discourses in the publication promote the importance of muscle size, alcohol tolerance, sport and violence, in all of which men have a biological advantage over women (Stibbe, 2004). In a variety of instances, health advice was given in a way that promoted hegemony and the unhealthy behaviour associated with it.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, key concepts and theories were discussed as they relate to this study. The literature was also reviewed, and relevant studies investigated as they pertain to this study. Three theories that will act as a framework to guide and inform the analysis of this study were explored. Social constructionism will inform the investigation into how knowledge is socially, and culturally, created through the discourses within the text. Gender performativity will help understand how masculinity is expressed and which ritualised actions constitute the performance of the masculine gender. Finally, critical social theory will influence the outlook of the analysis with a critical stance taken towards identifying the potentially harmful representations of hegemonic masculinity. Concepts that were explored include gender, gender roles and gender role conflict in addition to masculinity and hegemony. Literature that was reviewed included studies about hegemonic masculinity, competition, conflict, roles models and the role of the media.

### **Chapter Three – Method**

This chapter will lay out the methodology utilised within this study. First, the chapter will state what the research question of the study will be, followed by an explanation of how data was collected for the study. Next, a discussion of the analytic methodology utilised will be presented, namely discourse analysis. Issues of validity and reliability will be addressed, and the measures taken to mitigate any problems identified. The ethical ramifications of the study are considered next, together with a consideration of what measures were taken to mitigate any problems identified. Finally, the concept of reflexivity will be explained and how it was practically implemented within this study is discussed.

#### **Research questions**

The two research questions for this study are: 1) How is hegemonic masculinity produced, sustained and resisted in *Men's Health South Africa* magazine? 2) In particular, how do talk of role models and discourses of competition and conflict function in relation to masculinity?

#### **Data collection**

The subject of the study was *Men's Health South Africa* magazine, focusing on issues from 2017 and 2018. This time period was chosen as those were the most contemporary issues at the start of this study. Two years was deemed sufficient as there is a large number of articles in each month's publication. Time constraints and the depth of the analysis were also determining factors when selecting the number of issues to include in the study. Analysis entailed making use of the entire magazine; exemplary articles were then focused on for an in-depth deconstruction and analysis. Articles were chosen based on certain criteria including being of a sufficient length to form a narrative, containing internal dialogue or reflections by

the author or subject of the article, being about people - and not products, and the topic was relevant to the research questions.

*Men's Health South Africa* was chosen as it is a popular men's lifestyle magazine that focuses on health, body image, sport and issues of emotional wellbeing. *Men's Health* was first published in 1986 in the United States, first purely as a health-focused magazine but gradually incorporating more lifestyle articles. *Men's Health* was later globally expanded and was launched in several countries including South Africa (Marktwired, 2015). The South African publication contains a mix of shared content with the U.S. publication as well as local articles written by South African authors. *Men's Health* magazine is one of the largest men's magazine brands with 35 editions in 59 countries globally (Contributors, 2020). Due to the economic impact of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic Media24 the publishing company for *Men's Health* magazine in South Africa shut down the physical publication of the magazine and instead focused on their online media presence (Writer, 2020).

The target audience of *Men's Health* are educated men within the middle to upper income category and aged 25 to 44 years old (Magazine Networks, n.d). *Men's Health* magazine is illustrative of a particular kind of masculinity and thus the analysis took into account that there are more types of masculinity that are not represented in the publication.

### ***Analysis***

This study used discourse analysis to analyse twelve issues of *Men's Health South Africa* magazine from the years 2017 and 2018. Discourse Analysis is a qualitative methodology that is concerned with what text is doing, the way in which things are said and what is being said (Willig, 2013). It is a process of developing hypotheses about the function and consequences of language (Potter & Wetherell, 1988). Parker (2004, p. 308) defines discourse analysis as "the study of the way texts are constructed, the functions they serve in different contexts and the contradictions that run through them". People actively do things

with words, they account for, explain, blame, make excuses, construct facts, use cultural categories, and present themselves to others in specific ways. Discourse Analysis is concerned with discovering the recurrent patterns in this use of language (Nikander, 2008).

Discourse Analysis allowed for the examination of how hegemonic masculinity is discursively produced, sustained and resisted in *Men's Health* magazine. The broad steps to conducting Discourse Analysis as laid out by Potter and Wetherell (1987) were followed.

First, with regard to the choice of the research question, the question should be constructed in such a way that it takes into account that participants' discourse, or social texts, should be analysed in their own right and not as an avenue to phenomena such as attitudes or cognitive processes. Research questions tend to focus on construction and function - how is discourse put together and what is gained by its construction? Second, with regard to sample selection, sample sizes tend to be small as Discourse Analysis can be a very labour-intensive process and additional samples or interviews may not necessarily add to the quality of the analysis. Third, with regard to the collection of records and documents, the documents tend towards naturalistic records, which has the advantage of not being influenced in any way by the researcher. Records that contain a wide variety of (spoken or written) accounts are also preferred. Variation in accounts is desirable as consistency suggests that texts or participants are drawing on a limited set of interpretive repertoires or discourses. Variety shows a full range of resources people use when constructing meaning of their world. Fourth, the material has to be prepared for analysis. If interviews are conducted, a transcription is made of participants' responses; if written texts are used, these are gathered together for analysis. The transcribed material or gathered texts are then used as the basis for analysis. Fifth, the material is coded. Coding is the process of dividing up the data into manageable chunks. Data can be organised into themes or discourses that align with the research question. Parker (2004) further specifies that coding should take the following into

account: one should freely associate the varieties of meaning that appear in the text as a way of accessing cultural networks; systematically itemise objects, most commonly marked by nouns and subjects – characters, personae, role positions – as found in the text; reconstruct presupposed rights and responsibilities of subjects specified in the text, and finally map the network of relationships into patterns, these patterns or discourses can then be located in relation to ideology power and institutions. According to Nikander (2008, p. 418) “coding is more than the mechanical identification of categories. It should be guided by constructionist sensitivities and assumptions about language, interactions, and society and by the theoretical underpinnings and research question of the study”. Sixth, the analysis of the data is done. The analysis involves careful reading and re-reading of the content, reading for meaning and looking for systematic patterns that may occur in the text in light of the research question. The researcher needs to be aware of why they are reading a passage in a certain way and what characteristics of the passage produce this reading. The researcher should look for discursive devices occurring in the text used to manage interest and accountability of participants. These can include the use of metaphors, analogies, direct quotations, disclaimers, extreme case formulations, graphic descriptions, consensus formulations, and stake inoculation (a pre-emptive defence against potential counterclaims) among many others (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1991; Willig, 2013).

The analysis aims to identify patterns in the data looking for both differences and consistencies. Identifying variation involves looking for dissimilarity in either the content or forms of accounts; consistency is the identification of features shared by accounts or interpretive repertoires.

Interpretive repertoires are the base units of meaning that speakers use to construct versions of events, cognitive processes and other phenomena (McKenzie, 2005; Potter & Wetherell, 1988). People are social actors and as such are continuously orienting themselves

towards a specific interpretive context and adapting their discourse use to situations in which they find themselves (Gill, 2011). According to Gill, Discourse Analysis involves investigating and analysing discourse as well as the interpretive contexts and repertoires in which it occurs. Potter (1996, p. 9) defines an interpretative repertoire as: “A systematically related set of terms, often used with stylistic and grammatical coherence, and often organised around one or more central metaphors.” Potter (1996) further specifies that interpretative repertoires are grounded in history and are an important component of their specific cultural context. In addition, some repertoires may be specific to particular subcultures or institutional domains.

Analysis should interrogate the function and consequences of the text, forming tentative hypotheses using linguistic evidence found in the text. Specific to this study, the researcher structured the analysis by addressing the data in specific parts. Part one dealt with the first research question, namely: how is hegemonic masculinity produced, sustained and resisted in *Men's Health South Africa* magazine? The various discourses that were identified from the text that were representative of masculinity were discussed with quotations from relevant articles given as examples and analysed and then discussed accordingly. Part two addressed the second research question: how does talk of role models and discourses of competition and conflict function in relation to masculinity? The approach to the analysis was similar to that taken in part one, but there was a far closer reading and analysis of individual articles and the narrative that they formed. An overall conclusion was then written with the results of the analysis discussed.

### ***Reliability and Validity***

Reliability and validity were ensured by means of deviant case analysis. Deviant case analysis is a detailed examination of cases that go against the patterns previously identified in the study. This may serve to refute the assumptions the researcher has made or help to enrich

the analysis and make it more nuanced (Gill, 2011; Potter, 1996). After the initial analysis was completed the researcher again reviewed the body of data to look for instances where the discourse did not align with the general themes discovered. One such article was found and analysed, the resulting discussion then compared and contrasted the findings against the greater themes identified in the study. Discourse analysis does not aim to identify universal processes or make broad empirical generalisations. Discourse is seen as occasioned and specific, constructed from particular interpretive resources and designed for particular contexts. In addition discourse analysis is not concerned with whether the analysis is representative of a larger population, but rather in the content, organisation and function of particular texts (Gill, 2011).

### **Ethics**

Ethical considerations in social research involve gaining informed consent from participants, the confidentiality of sensitive data, the anonymity of participants, prepublication access, and harm that may be caused to participants (such as trauma or social stigma) among others (Lewin & Somekh, 2005). This study made use of data that is readily available in the public domain, and thus there was a low risk of bringing harm to those being studied. That being said, the authors and certain subjects of the articles are easily identified by any potential reader of the study and as such the researcher took care not to be derisive or to single out authors or individuals for critique but instead focused on the text and discourses uncovered within their work. The research should also not bring reputational harm to any author or the publication of *Men's Health South Africa*. Another consideration was those whose lived experience relies on the discourses identified in this study. They could view this study as a critique of their lifestyles or personalities and feel personally attacked or belittled. I tried to address this risk by framing my critique as respectful of the legitimacy of different lifestyles and ideological commitments while seeking to make visible the discursive building

blocks that construct and support them. Overall, the study sought to cause no harm in any shape or form and attempted to treat the subject matter with respect and dignity.

### **Reflexivity**

According to Gillemin and Gillam (2004, p. 275) “reflexivity involves a critical reflection of how the researcher constructs knowledge from the research process”. Utilising reflexivity assists the researcher to be aware of the various influences affecting the researcher’s role in the research process and to engage critically to bring awareness to the particular strengths that the researcher brings to the study as well as the limitations of the knowledge produced, thereby strengthening the validity and quality of the work done. Writing reflexively is seen as a tool to help situate the researcher in their own personal histories and how this can influence the research process; this helps to produce more accurate and valid research. The reflexive process includes an analysis of the research subject, then the reflection of the observation itself: what do I know and how do I know it? (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Pillow, 2003).

In qualitative research, it is now generally accepted that the researcher plays an integral active participatory role in the research done, in the construction, collection, selection and interpretation of data. Qualitative research is co-constituted between the researcher and the participants, meaning is negotiated within the particular social contexts unique to the study and it is accepted that a different researcher may uncover different meanings due to their unique subject position (Finlay & Gough, 2008; Pillow, 2003).

While conducting discourse analysis it is possible to acknowledge that the researcher’s own language is constructing a version of reality and that one is not immune to the social and psychological phenomena that are being studied (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).



Reflexivity as introspection involves engaging one's personal experience and meaning gained to yield a richer understanding and interpretation to the research (Finlay & Gough, 2008). Reflexivity, in this case, is a means of illustrating the rhetorical construction of the work by analysis of one's own analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The researcher needs to be mindful that their voice does not overshadow the voice or meaning in the data and that this does not shift attention away from the subject of study to the researcher's own experiences. The challenge is not to use personal reflection as an end unto itself but as a pathway to greater engagement with the data to the goal of producing better, less distorted research accounts (Finlay & Gough, 2008; Pillow, 2003).

This approach was utilised in that as the researcher engaged with the analysis of masculinity, the researcher considered their subject position as a cis-gendered man and how that influenced the choice of study and the biases that may have occurred in the analysis. The thoughts and observations were collated in the Reflexive Consideration section of the study.

### ***Reflexive Considerations***

In my teenage years, I was an avid reader of *Men's Health* magazine, which most likely played a role in the formation of my own masculine identity. This has influenced my decision to use *Men's Health South Africa* as the subject of my study; it will be interesting to reflect on the kind of influence it has had on me. As I have grown older and have been exposed to different people with different viewpoints, I have become increasingly aware of the different discourses governing our daily interactions with each other and with traditional and social media. This study is of interest to me as it relates quite closely to my person and provides a space to critically self-evaluate how I sustain or disrupt the various discourses of masculinity and competition. Many of my close friends are women and feminists, and I am prompted regularly to think about my position within the friendships and the greater impact that I have, as a man, on those around me. As an individual, I am complicit with discourses of

masculinity and competition in that I choose individualistic sports and electronic entertainment that I am good at where I can dominate my opponents such as cycling and online gaming but reject those in which I am not competent. I like to win. It gives me a sense of power and reaffirms my masculinity. As a consequence of this, I may especially initially have ‘unconsciously’ been resistant to identifying and challenging discourses in which I have a stake, and I needed to be aware of this, both with regard to the texts that I chose to analyse and how I conducted the analysis. At the same time, my position as an (former) insider in the world created by *Men’s Health*, can hopefully also contribute to a richer, more empathic understanding of the occurrences in that world.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter set out to identify and explain the methodology utilised within this study, the research questions, data collection methods, and the data-analysis technique, discourse analysis, its theoretical underpinnings, and how it will be practically implemented within this study. An exploration of the ethical implications of the study was held with potential problem areas identified and the steps taken to address those issues discussed. Next, issues of reliability and validity were explored with the use of deviant case analysis, and reflexivity used to mitigate any issues that might occur during the analysis.

## Chapter Four – Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter, an analysis of the text will take place in three parts. Part one will identify and discuss discourses that produce (particular kinds of) masculinity within the text of *Men's Health South Africa*. Part two will identify role models as they appear in the text and how they function as exemplars of the masculine gender for the readers to emulate, as well as investigating discourse of competition and conflict and how they function in relation to hegemonic masculinity. Finally, part three will investigate alternative discourses and deviant cases that arise from the text.

Part one is divided into several key discourses with quotations that are representative of each of the discourses discussed. Part two is structured in such a way that individual articles are closely examined to reveal how the use of role models are used as exemplars of masculinity to the readers of *Men's Health South Africa*. Finally, part three is again a close examination of a deviant case and how the discourses differ from most texts in *Men's Health*.

Photographs sourced from *Men's Health* articles are used as an accompaniment to some of the discourses discussed. These are not presented as formal, captioned images as they are not intended as conventional 'scientific' illustrations, but rather meant to function as a visceral evocation, in a non-verbal mode, of the discursive forces at work in the texts.

## Part One

*Your prescription to be a Man, take one daily*



(Curtis, 2017)

How is hegemonic masculinity produced, sustained and resisted in *Men's Health South Africa* magazine?

Masculinity is produced in the text using a variety of discourses. Holistically, these discourses shape a certain ideal expression of how *Men's Health South Africa* as a publication views how a man should behave and conduct himself. These representations of masculinity are broken down into discourses as discussed below.

### **Discourse: Body as a machine.**

The first discourse that seems to emerge from the pages of *Men's Health* is that of the body as a machine that should be carefully tuned, calibrated and re-fuelled.

“Sure, when you picture the set of November’s Justice League you may not imagine Ben Affleck in a fight with Tupperware containers of meat and veg; yet this is the reality.” (Curtis, 2017, p. 47)

“If I could take a pill that gave me the right nutrients so I could give up food, I would.” (Flax, 2017b, p. 48)

These quotes illustrate the instrumentality of food, and how it is seen as mere fuel for the body. This discourse feeds into the notion that the body is a machine that is there to be optimised and improved. This complements the idea that men should always be in control - in this case, control over their diet and therefore their bodies.

“They’re athletes first and fighting machines second. They train six days a week and rest for one, even when they’re not working towards a specific fight. Every action, every routine is a choice – designed to condition, build fitness, develop stamina, strengthen the mind and to groove the movement so perfectly that, when they have to deliver exactly the same performance under pressure, their body is able to do it without hesitating.” (Brodie, 2017, p. 74)

Routine is seen as key to prepare for an event or trial. The act of routinely doing something to prepare evokes a discourse of maintenance, which keys into the idea that the body is a machine that needs to be maintained and cared for.

“Look at Zac Efron, who bolted eight kilograms of box-fresh muscle to his frame since his singing and squealing days in *High School Musical*.” (Curtis, 2017, p. 48)

This text makes a clear value judgement of the importance of one’s musculature over the ability to sing, even going so far as to use the word squealing to describe it. ‘Bolted’ implies that the body is some kind of industrial machine, and ‘box fresh’ implies that muscles and therefore one’s body is a commodity. One purchases a gym membership or the services

of a personal trainer to bolt-on a fresh new body. The importance of body image and being muscular ties in with the hegemonic idea that the body is a source of power and is a medium through which men compare themselves to others.

“If you can get your mind to believe, you can push your body to do unbelievable things... The body is secondary, unless there’s significant injury.” (Benedict, 2017, p. 81)

“Your body says, ‘I’m tired’. Then the Colonel says you’re not. You listen, and you run. This teaches your mind that you are not as tired as you thought. This makes you strong. If your body says you’re tired, your mind must say it’s not.” (Nicholson, 2018b, p. 120)

These texts talk about the mind's ability to overcome the limitations of the body and to subject one's self to new extremes of endurance or physical ability. This discourse of control is key to the representation of masculinity in *Men's Health* - one is required to control overeating, routine, and one's body. This level of control is the same kind of attention one would apply to the care and maintenance of a machine. Inhabiting a body is like riding a motorcycle. Fuel it, prepare it, and control (or operate) it. The body is seen as a tool for achieving a goal, be it a race, a fight or attracting others. This instrumentality of the body requires high levels of self-restraint and dedication. This dedication to the building and maintenance of musculature can be seen as an expression of muscular masculinity (Wamsley, 1999).

**Discourse: Mental fortitude is the key to success.**

Mental strength is seen as a masculine quality, especially in the hyper-masculine context of the military.

“...The mental performance coach for the Rangers, and Noble work constantly to make the Rangers mentally tougher, emphasising the big picture as well as in-the-moment the moment strategies. The Rangers are moving away from goal setting and instead focusing on ‘being’. He encourages men to check in with themselves daily. ‘Are you the person you want to be? How are you working towards that? What is stopping you from being that person?’ ...this kind of motivation is more powerful than trying to hit a new weight number on the bench press.” (Benedict, 2017, p. 81)

Mental toughness is seen as a key factor in combat effectiveness. This example is subversive of the norm of goal setting. It focuses on achievement to create mental discipline and focusing on the experience of “being”; this is a shift towards mindfulness - which is more traditionally feminine, associated with activities such as meditation and yoga.

“It’s funny, because those physical benefits are mostly due to yoga’s mental benefits. As a soldier, I believed I could control everything around me completely and thoroughly. But the practice of Yoga – breathing, being present, and letting go – taught me to allow things to happen naturally.” (Kiesewetter, 2017, p. 52)

In an article on how to ‘build fast and furious muscle’ with Scott Eastwood (the son of Hollywood icon Clint Eastwood) we learn that:

“‘Yoga changed my life’, he says earnestly but without pretension. ‘I partly do it for flexibility, but I also do it for my mental health. Yoga is meditation with movement. It helps me get to a place that’s serene, where you don’t judge yourself. Sure, everyone has anxiety in their lives, but the more you do it, the easier it is to get into this good place. With Yoga and meditation and all my varied ways of working out, I operate on a very calm level. A lot of people in Hollywood stay calm by taking pills. I do it with an endorphin release.” (Flax, 2017b, p. 49)

These two excerpts are from a soldier and an actor. The soldiers had formed a hot-box yoga studio at one of the military bases in the Middle East. At first, they were judged by their fellow soldiers but as they observed the mental and physical benefits of yoga in those who participated, more and more soldiers joined the studio. The actor is the usual representation of a man: white, handsome and heavily muscled, and while the rest of the article focuses on the actor's career, his attitude towards women and his sex life, the introduction of yoga to cope with stress and relax is a subversion of the norm (namely that men should not do activities deemed as feminine, let alone openly talk about how to address one's mental health).

“But it's not as bad as I expect. In fact, it's more than just heart-boosting cardio. It's head-calming meditation. As I pedal, I focus on my breathing and turn inward, brainstorming my career and troubleshooting my life, eventually just losing myself in the sweat and the cycling. It's been a long time since I sat with my thoughts for 60 uninterrupted minutes.” (Easter, 2017b, p. 94)

The author is describing a spinning session and activity that he does not normally do. He observes that the activity becomes meditative and that it has been a long time since he has just sat with his thoughts. This keys into the discourse that exercise has mental-health benefits, and that long-distance cardio exercise can even be a form of meditation.

“They look like zealots, fanatics, and madmen – ultra-runners who have grown tired of marathon distances and want to go further... But they haven't lost their minds- that prolonged, painful, and often impossible act of meditation on two legs is doing the opposite. And that's according to science: it's helping man cope with and cure the stress, anxiety and depression of modern life.” (Nicholson, 2018a, p. 102)



“A daily run is a little holiday, from stress, and chores, and people, and bullies and financial angst and emotional upsets. How simple and beautiful, to hit a path after work, feel better, click ‘reset’...” (Nicholson, 2018a, p. 103)

These two extracts further reinforce the discourse of exercise and mental health, as a method of coping with the stresses of day-to-day life. And ultimately of helping one be more successful.

“Or better yet, start exposing yourself to your fears. To begin mastering your thinking, you’ll need to start pulling down the mental barriers that led you to your phobia in the first place.” (Vilane, 2017, p. 35)

Here the author is advising on how to overcome a phobia. Fear is seen as weak and something that needs to be overcome. A man who can be mentally disciplined enough to control his emotions and conquer his fears would have the approval of other men. Men aspire to be free from fear. Here the focus is on mastering one’s thinking in order to improve one’s emotional resilience. There is a dominant discourse that men are emotionally resilient and able to control their emotions and, in this case, their fears.

“His first days as a paramedic were a flurry of emotions. He didn’t know what to expect, or what might be waiting for him at the other end of an emergency call. ‘It was traumatic’, he says, glossing over the details of some of his more harrowing experiences. ‘But at the same time, I was excited to be doing something I had dreamt about as a kid.’ (Legg, 2017b, p. 87)

This text is from a series of articles looking at role models. With a focus on how the reader should aspire to be like them. Here the text talks about a paramedic, but more specifically how the paramedic shows emotional resilience in the face of a high-pressure

environment. This focus encourages the reader to model the same behaviour in their own lives as men are seen to be in control and emotionally resilient.

Several key discourses were identified as important to the theme of mental fortitude and key to success. These include mental strength, mastery over fear, that men are emotionally resilient, acceptance of mindfulness and yoga, and that exercise has mental health benefits. These discourses all speak to the growing acknowledgement amongst men of the importance of dealing with stress and anxiety and how being calm can lead to success. This is, on the face of it, contrary to the usual representation of men in the hegemonic context, where the subject of mental health is almost taboo, and practising Yoga or mindfulness to improve one's mental wellbeing is certainly taboo. However, the emphasis placed on softer, ostensibly more feminine, practices such as yoga and meditation are not purely a corrective to or an abandonment of the hard-muscled, masculine body-as-machine discourse. In some ways, this kind of mental-health talk reveals itself as still tied to the idea of mastery and control, but now extending its application from the body to the mind. This way of being aligns with the concept of psycho-discursive practices, namely rebellious masculinity discussed by Wetherell and Edley (1999). A real man sits astride and expertly controls both his body *and* his mind like he would ride a finely tuned machine. The instances of discussion of mental strength and mastery over fear are thus in alignment with the usual discourse of hegemonic masculinity where these feelings are there to be faced and conquered.

**Discourse: Dedication equals results.**

“Chris Hemsworth grew into a bulky mass of strength to become the brawny god Thor, but suggest he was tempted by the juice to his trainer Michael Knight, and you will lose a few teeth. ‘Top actors spend hours in the gym,’ he says.” (Curtis, 2017, p. 47)

This text is from an article interviewing a personal trainer whose clients include Hollywood actors. The discourse identified here is that being dedicated to something will give results. One is expected to put in hard work and shortcuts are not acceptable, where even accusing someone of taking a shortcut could result in physical violence.

“A lot of people complain that they can’t train because they’re travelling so much, but that’s complete rubbish.” (Nortje, 2017b, p. 42)

The above is a statement from a biographical article about the CEO of a health company, whose physical fitness is particularly important to his corporate performance. Such individuals are presented as having a no-compromise stance towards exercise, and as expecting others to be able to meet their standards.

“Everyone wants the ‘special programme’ that actors supposedly have to get in shape, but there isn’t one. The only thing that truly works a hundred percent of the time is hard work.” (Legg, 2017e, p. 96)

This further reinforcement of the discourse that dedication and hard work is what is required to succeed comes from a very different context, but the message is the same: there is no easy method to gain results or to improve oneself, only hard work.

“If it’s his bike that got him there, it’s his passion, unwavering dedication and pro-class work ethic that is going to take him further. Perhaps all the way to the greatest stage in road cycling: the Tour de France.” (Kuschke, 2018, p. 19)

This comes from another biographical article discussing the success story of a young pro cyclist who worked himself up from nothing into the pro-cycling scene through “passion, dedication and work ethic”. The message is clear: dedication and hard work will bring you success.

“Lerena trains three times a day, six days a week. He only takes Sunday off. ‘It can be hard to motivate yourself when there’s no actual fight’ he says... ‘but I’m in a good rhythm now. I’m a lot more disciplined and focused than when I started training. Now I have it down to a T.” (Brodie, 2017, p. 76)

Intensive training and dedication to always being prepared are what this champion boxer is exemplifying to the reader; this is how this boxer wins fights.

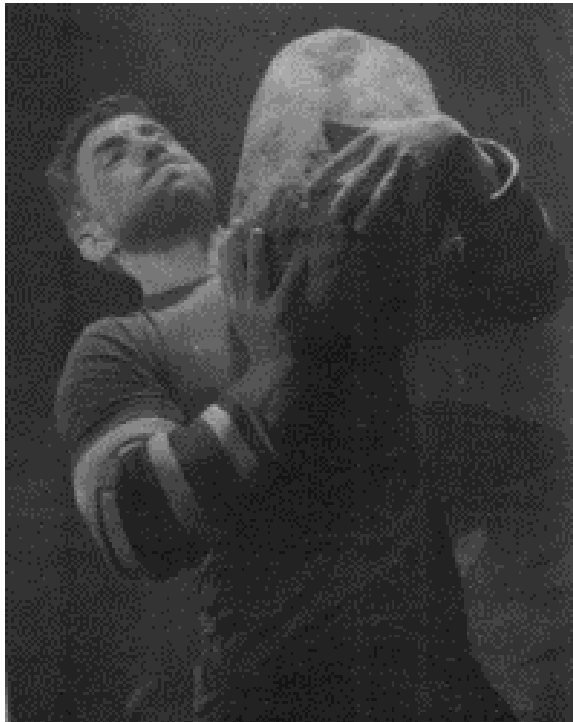
“‘My favourite clients are the ones who show up every time, the ones who don’t complain, who get shit done and go home,’ says David. ‘Do that, and you’ll be happier for it.’” (Legg, 2017c, p. 36)

This excerpt is from a personal trainer discussing his clients who emphasise the importance of work ethic and how he prefers clients who are dedicated and put in the extra effort.

Taken together, these texts draw on and re-inscribe the discourse that dedication will give results. From the actor to the CEO, from champion boxer to development cyclist - all show how they have put in hard work and passion and have been rewarded with results. This discourse is enlisted with the overt purpose of influencing the reader to do the same, go the extra mile, please the personal trainer – do not complain just do it – and you will be rewarded with the results. In addition to the overt intentions of these texts they also, more covertly, serve to construct the world yet again as governed by a certain sort of masculinity. This discourse ties into hegemonic masculinity in that it reinforces that men are constantly told to strive for the best, to put in hard work and dedicate themselves to a particular goal. Whether or not this is a good influence would depend on what the individual has dedicated himself, but it is a typical discourse. In the case of *Men’s Health*, the publication would like its readers to be dedicated to the goal of personal fitness and uses articles such as these to promote that

agenda. In the process, they are also promoting a much broader agenda that positions men as ‘masters of the universe’. This is reflective of the global hegemonic nature of media as a whole and media’s ability to shape the actions of its consumers (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

**Discourse: Being strong is to be a man.**



(Masiliver, 2018)

“He keeps going until failure, barely twisting up to the bar one last time before collapsing. Two minutes later he does another set. Same thing.” (Flax, 2017b, p. 48)

“A small group of men are engaged in a gruelling, primal test of strength... sends shockwaves through the half-tonne tyre our hands are holding in a white-knuckle grip. Sweat drips from my chin and flows between the 10cm-thick treads, pooling on the concrete floor below. I glance at the two men on my flanks. Each face contorts in anticipation.” (Masiliver, 2018, p. 78)

“... a recent UK poll found that just 2% of young British men would describe themselves as ‘masculine’. Can it be a mere coincidence, then, that so many of us are trying to reconnect with our inner caveman? There’s something really satisfying about flipping a tyre, throwing it to the ground, hearing that loud noise and thinking: ‘I just did that’... ‘It makes you feel powerful. And physical power is very addictive.’”  
(Masiliver, 2018, p. 79)

There are many instances within the pages of *Men’s Health* where the discussion of physical strength, how one can become strong and the idolisation of those who are strong occurs. There is a common discourse that one should become strong by any means available and to be strong is masculine. Strength is to be pursued even at the expense of one’s health and wellbeing, “he keeps going until failure”, “tomorrow my knees will be swollen, my shoulders a deep shade of purple, and my hands will be bloody; but for now, we drive”, “the sort of stuff that bashes your shins, bruises your joints and tears up your palms” there is a complete disregard of one’s body – pushing it to its limits so one can reap the benefits of the physical and mental benefits of strength: “there’s something really satisfying about flipping a tyre, throwing it to the ground, hearing that loud noise and thinking: ‘I just did that’... It makes you feel powerful. And physical power is very addictive.”. This quote is representative of the fact that strength is physical power, and that power is addictive, the agenda of the articles discussing strength is to encourage the reader to become strong themselves. Physical strength is one of the key characteristics of masculinity and hegemonic masculinity as it is through this physical power that men maintain their dominant position in society. Strength is seen as a primal quality, a return to the core of what makes a man as evidenced by this quote: “...just 2% of young British men would describe themselves as ‘masculine’. Can it be a mere coincidence, then, that so many of us are trying to reconnect with our inner caveman?”  
(Masiliver, 2018, p. 79).

**Discourse: Warrior ideation.**



(Babin, 2017)

Below are some excerpts from articles discussing the experiences of soldiers during their military service. The texts focus on the heroic traits of the soldiers, namely situational awareness, decisive decision making, leadership and service.

“Heavy, low clouds spit rain on the 21 obstacles that make up the 1-mile (1.6km) assault course the US army Rangers use to hone agility and speed. The obstacles are named in blunt military vernacular: The Tough One (a 10m-high rope-and-ladder climb), the Weaver (a log pyramid that they wriggle up, through and down), and the Inverted Rope Descent (a 40m slide from a 12m tower). Ten Rangers are racing for four places in an upcoming all-service fitness and tactical skills contest.” (Benedict, 2017, p. 80)

“As I looked down the alleyway through my night-vision goggles, suddenly seven or eight men rounded the corner not forty meters from us. They were heavily armed and rapidly moving towards us. For a split second, my mind questioned what my eyes were seeing. But there it was: the unmistakable outlines of AK-47 rifles, and RGP-72 shoulder-fired rocket and at least one belt-fed machine gun. They weren’t there to shake our hands. These were armed enemy fighters manoeuvring to attack. We were in trouble.” (Babin, 2017, p. 48)

“Blood pumping, adrenaline surging, I knew every nano-second counted. This situation could overwhelm the most competent leader and seasoned combat veteran. But the words of my immediate boss – our task unit commander, echoed in my head, words I’d regularly heard during a full year of intensive training and preparation: ‘Relax. Look around. Make a call.’” (Babin, 2017, p. 49)

These examples are representative of heroic masculinity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). The texts idolise the soldiers and push the discourse that the reader should aspire to exemplify these traits in themselves and their daily interactions.

“Call it the Art of Bruising or the Hurt Business – boxing and mixed martial arts are known for chewing up and spitting out contenders. You need an indomitable fighting spirit to go the distance but, in the ring, it’s technique, skill and discipline that matters just as much – not just to win the match, but to keep you from getting clocked or concussed on the path to glory.” (Brodie, 2017, p. 75)

This text describes athletes in the sport of boxing and mixed martial arts and contains discourse around fighting and warrior ideation. Two key discourses identified are having a fighting spirit, and skill and discipline. The reader is encouraged to look up to these athletes and emulate the qualities that make them successful in his everyday life.



The discourses around the idolisation of warriors – soldiers and professional fighters, focus on the heroic aspects of the roles, leadership, having a fighting spirit and discipline. These are qualities the reader is encouraged to emulate and align with the representation of heroic masculinity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Whitehead, 2005).

**Discourse: Fraternity.**

“... my partners and I flip that half-tonne of rubber for the 15<sup>th</sup> and final time of the night, I feel every bit of the bond Winwood describes. The group at the Commando temple is made up of salesmen and paramedics, teachers, students and businessmen, but for the 90 minutes we spend together, toiling over the tools of the strongman trade, we are brothers. We are warriors. We are men.” (Masiliver, 2018, p. 81)

The discourse of fraternity, the feelings of comradeship or brotherhood between men, is positively associated with masculinity. Here the author describes his experience completing difficult physical activities with strangers in a gym. The idea is that no matter whom they are, the very act of their participating in a shared difficult physical activity, makes them brothers, even fellow warriors - this sense of fraternity makes them men.

**Discourse: Man must always be ready for action.**

“All I can do I make sure I’m constantly training – that I’m ready for the next time someone needs my help. I want to ensure there’s no doubt that I will again be able to do everything possible to rescue them.” (Legg, 2017b, p. 85)

This text brings to attention the discourse that men should always be in a state of readiness, ready to face the next challenge or threat. This also associated with the discourse of men as protectors, which is interestingly underrepresented in *Men’s Health*. The topic of the text is an interview with a man who works for Sea Rescue, who failed to save someone from drowning, the man felt that he failed because he was not fit or ready enough when he

was needed. The passage evokes sympathy in the reader for the man who failed and perhaps subliminally asks the reader, what would happen if you were in that situation? Would you be ready?

**Discourse: High stress or dangerous activities are seen as manly.**



(Carter, 2018)

“Gunfire rattles off in the distance. There’s a pause, then an echoing bang as a grenade explodes in the middle of a dusty street. Staff at the hospital keep working. They’re used to the sporadic skirmishes that have become commonplace in the Central African Republic, but they know that the next series of manic retorts could be right on their doorstep.” (Legg, 2017b, p. 86)

This text describes the working conditions in a field hospital in the Central African Republic and the article revolves around a volunteer for Doctors Without Borders. There is a

clear intention for the reader to see the situation as dangerous and for the volunteer to be seen as manly for risking his life to help others.

“Swimrun involves, as the name suggests, a lot of swimming and running. In a two-man team, without stoppages for transitions, you’re involved from the get-go in a brutal, primal duathlon: scrambling up rocks, beaches and trails and swimming through kelp, rip tides and swells, all without changing your gear.” (Jones, 2017a, p. 37)

The article discusses a race and its risks and thrills. Special attention is paid to how it is non-stop, with difficult terrain and one has to contend with rip tides and a rough ocean current.

“Hamlett previously spent 10 years in Russia, understanding training, nutrition, hard work and suffering. In extra-harsh conditions, he watched Russian athletes cut paths through the snow to run, and dig holes in the ice to catch fish for dinner.” (Nicholson, 2018b, p. 120)

Hamlett is a coach, who as the article describes, spent time in Russia observing training techniques for Olympic athletes. The article brings to attention how the athletes are training under extreme circumstances.

“You might picture highliners stepping straight off the ledge and out onto the line. That’s how I reckoned it went: centimetres-thick nylon webbing is pulled taught between anchors on opposing cliffs, a protective leach is clipped to your harness, and out you go, a bird on a wire. But it’s not that simple. A fall near the anchor could have you swinging back into rock, breaking bones. So instead, you slide out a metre or two on your butt and use a sit-start method... With no ground to steady you, you lift your torso and pull a foot beneath your body so your heel presses into your butt. Then, with

one arm held out for balance, you bring your free foot up to the one and try to rise slowly, as if you are coming out of a single-leg squat. Next - if you are me, anyway – you fall ass over ears, taking a bruising ‘whipper’, nylon lacerating your inner thighs, adrenaline spiking as you plunge towards the abyss. As you dangle, you have time to listen to all those helpful voices in your head: *You’re weak... You’re embarrassing... You’re a waste of everyone’s time.*” (Carter, 2018, p. 37)

This article discusses the author's experience of attempting to walk along a high-line slack rope. This particular text is interesting as not only is it another glorification of the discourse that high-risk activities are seen as manly, but of the emotional consequences if one fails at the activity. As the author falls and falls again, he has the feeling of being weak, being embarrassed and worrying that he is wasting people's time. At another point in the article, he agonises over opening up about failing to his coach:

“I really hope I’ll be able to cross”, I tell him. “But I also feel like if that’s my only measure of success, then I’m also more really learning what I’m supposed to”. Dakota would bust my balls if he thought I was being too earnest, and I expect a ribbing. But no. “Remember this moment”, he says. “This is the moment you became a slacker”. (Carter, 2018, p. 37)

This interaction ends up being a positive influence and gives the author motivation to try again, despite his worrying that he would not be seen as manly. Ultimately, he never makes it across the slackline.

All of these texts describe extreme or dangerous conditions to which the subjects of the articles are subjected or are observing. The discourse in these texts represents masculinity as involving the pursuit of being in a dangerous or risky environment or activity. There, one is able to prove to others how manly one is.

**Discourse: Nature: a true man's playground.**

“Forget the haters – convertibles now can be fast, powerful, sexy cars. Besides the best view and lack of blind spots, you’ll get some much-needed Vitamin D and a closer experience with nature – you can feel smell, hear and taste the outdoors.”

(Jones, 2017b, p. 26)

This is an expert from a text discussing various kinds of cars and if the cars are sufficiently manly. The passage talks about how if one drives a convertible, the driver will be closer to nature but through the medium of a machine.

“To be a true mountain man, you need to pack like you were born in the hills.”

(Vilane, 2017, p. 35)

The quote is from an article about how to prepare for the outdoors, accompanying a question and answers segment from an expert mountaineer. This quote is interesting as it foregrounds a discourse around a particular kind of masculinity, that of the mountain man. In this instance, a mountain man is a man who was born in the hills, is prepared and inherently knows what kind of equipment one should be packing for an adventure.

“But the outdoors always had a hold on him, and he would jump at any opportunity to leave the concrete jungle behind and escape up the nearest mountain, or lose himself chasing trails in a dense uncharted forest.” (Masiliver, 2018, p. 94)

The above passage is a description of an actor from an interview conducted by a *Men's Health* writer. Various discourses can be identified in this text, namely: That in modern life we reside within a concrete jungle, something artificial and nothing like nature, one should need to escape from the concrete jungle to nature. Secondly, that nature should be desired, discovering uncharted forests and forging a trail within them.

“You get to experience hidden beaches, scintillating water routes and crossings, secret sandy spots – and there are no real rules or conventions to follow. You just need to listen to Mother Nature as the course director, then work as a team to get to the end.” (Jones, 2017a, p. 37)

This extract contains a description of a race, which contains interesting discourse about nature. The description is couched in terms of exploration and many adjectives are used to highlight the associated excitement. As for the race itself, there are no rules, this discourse of freedom to choose your own path is linked to the discourse of exploring nature and conquering unknown territory.

These texts all contain various discourses linked to the theme of nature’s being an important environment within which to enact one’s masculinity. This involves using machinery to be closer to nature, behaving like a mountain man and being correctly prepared for adventure, escaping the concrete jungle of modern life, and conquering unknown trails. These discourses are linked to masculinity in that an aspect of hegemonic masculinity is the domination of others. Nature is the unknown other, a wild frontier, which is to be explored and conquered. These discourses can be considered to be emblematic of heroic masculinity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Whitehead, 2005) and performative in nature (Butler, 2011).

**Discourse: A man is a leader.**

“Now think of your life – the bosses you deal with, the officials you voted for, your kids’ coaches and teachers. How good is the quality of leadership you see every day? Inspiring? Horrible? Meh? ‘There’s a woeful lack of good leaders today’...” (Spiker, 2017, p. 112)

This is a quotation from an article discussing leadership in today's modern society. It introduces a discourse that there is a lack of good leadership in positions of authority today. The implication is that something should be done about it.

“Amid this death of leadership, however, lies opportunity: a chance for you to step up. Yes, you. Leaders are made, not born.” (Spiker, 2017, p. 112)

Here the text introduces its agenda, for the reader to “step up” and become the leader he wants to see. “Leaders are made, not born” implies that anyone can become a leader, it only requires one to be motivated.

“Leadership isn't dying; it's evolving. To step up, you need to understand the new rules of being a leading man.” (Spiker, 2017, p. 112)

The link between being a leader and being a man is made explicit here, even going so far as to label it as one who is a “leading man”. The text also discusses how in order to be a successful leader one needs to be agile and understand how leadership styles are changing.

“Leading by example is crucial to gaining the respect of your colleagues; but when you work in a health and care company, as Karsten does, it's non-negotiable. ‘You *have* to walk the talk, no matter what industry you are in...’” (Nortje, 2017b, p. 43)

An aspect of the change in leadership is the discourse that leaders should lead by example, by doing this one earns the respect of your fellow men. Without that respect, one could not be an effective leader.

“Your energy levels, your passion, and your physical being are all things that inspire people to follow you as a leader, so being healthy and taking care of your body and mind is very important.” (Nortje, 2017b, p. 42)

Here the text comes back to the overall agenda of the publication, linking physical wellbeing with the ability to lead. The interpretive repertoire of health enabling any activity is used as one is an effective leader by using exercise to maintain their health and mental focus.

“Paul firmly believes that success in business is all about attitude, and that fitness and physical health plays a key role in maintaining that attitude. ‘Achieving your goals and making a success of your business has a huge amount to do with the people around you,’ says Paul. ‘Good leaders are judged by their ability to listen and communicate – you can’t do either if your mind is cluttered and distracted.’” (Nortje, 2017a, p. 47)

Paul is used as a role model and example of the interpretive repertoire that if you are healthy and physically active, you can accomplish anything. Ability to lead is linked with a positive attitude and a positive attitude is maintained through being physically fit.

Within the theme of a man is a leader, the ability to effectively lead other men is linked with the perception that leadership is changing, that one should lead by example and that maintaining one’s physical fitness helps one to have a good attitude and be a good leader. The text also questions the ability of today’s leaders and challenges the reader to “step up” and be the leader they want to see. The ability to lead is also linked with the interpretive repertoire of good health and physical activity enabling one to be a good leader. Leadership is linked with masculine identity with the text explicitly referring to “leading men” and all examples of leaders in the articles are men.

### **Discourse: Men as providers.**

“It hits men, who see themselves as providers, especially hard. ‘That’s just how we are wired’, Joshua says. ‘We’re supposed to make sure everything is taken care of –



and when we can't take care of it, stress levels go through the roof. It's this vicious cycle that eats you up inside.'" (Flax, 2017a, p. 79)

This text is from an article discussing financial wellbeing and how men are seen as providers for the family. Here Joshua intrinsically links that ability to provide and his sense of masculine identity. To the point that when he cannot provide it causes stress and anxiety as he is not living up to the standard set by society.

"Whether you're overweight or under-funded, the solution is the same: to make things better, things have to change. A lot. Yes, right now." (Flax, 2017a, p. 78)

From the same article, this is the author's advice to the reader. Interestingly the author conflates two different discourses into one, being overweight and under-funded can both be solved by making an immediate change to one's lifestyle. Not managing one's finances then also takes on the negative connotations of being overweight, given the scope of the publication is oriented towards health, something most readers would like to avoid.

The discourse of men as providers is represented in *Men's Health* through anecdotal accounts and advice from the authors to the reader. Men are represented as providers through the perpetuation of societal norms that men need to be the breadwinners of the family and the consequence of failing in that role is a sense of stress and anxiety. The authors attempt to persuade the reader to be more financially aware through the tactic of likening being in financial trouble to being overweight or physically unhealthy. A state that carries negative connotations for a reader of a health publication.

### **Discourse: Virility.**

"When the male is identified as the infertile one, there is a large amount of self-doubt, poor self-esteem and compromised gender identity on his side.'" (Legg, 2017a, p. 107)

Here is a collection of texts discussing male fertility. There is a discourse around how virility and the ability to father children is intrinsically linked to one's sense of masculine identity. When there are medical problems affecting a man's ability to father children it affects his self-esteem and gender identity.

“...feelings of inadequacy can affect every part of a man's life. ‘Men often associate virility and fertility with masculinity.’” (Legg, 2017a, p. 108)

This quote further supports the discursive link between fertility and masculinity. Interestingly it talks about general feelings of inadequacy and how a lack of fertility can exacerbate those feelings.

“...his sperm count was low and his chances of having kids were nearly non-existent. For a guy in his forties who wanted to start a family, it could have been a crippling blow.” (Legg, 2017a, p. 106)

“...he often approached sex with a sense of dread. For the first time in his life he had performance anxiety.” (Legg, 2017a, p. 107)

These quotes bring to light the emotional effect that infertility can have, feelings of anxiety and dread. The discourse of sexual performance is also spoken about with a man's fertility negatively affecting his sense of ability to perform.

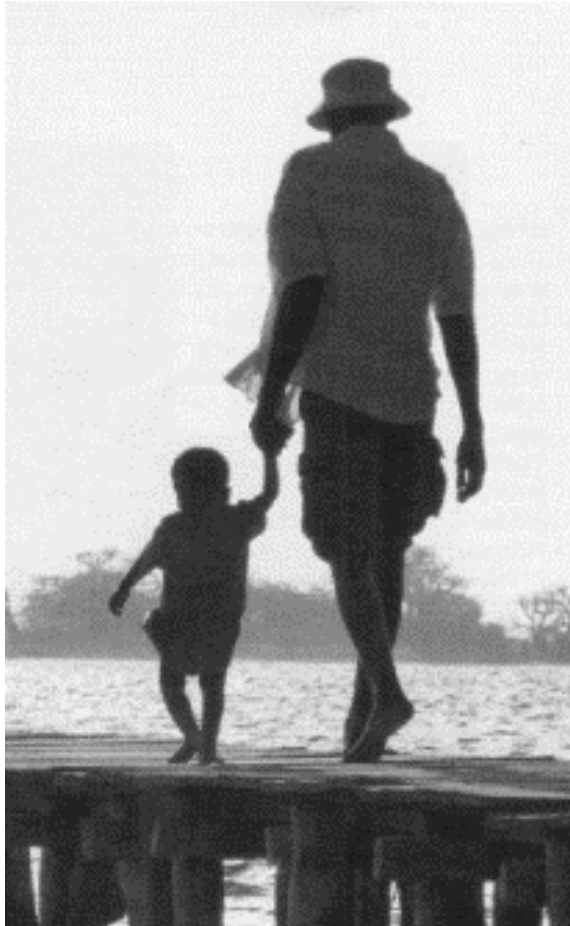
“...the traditional perception that infertility is almost always a female issue is dead wrong. Reality: in 50% of cases, a male factor is present, ...” (Legg, 2017a, p. 107)

Here the article challenges the traditional discourse that fertility is a female problem and offers some statistics and figures aimed at changing that perception as well as giving men the responsibility for their own fertility. In the context of *Men's Health*, men are encouraged to solve their fertility problems through exercise and a healthy lifestyle with male-centred anecdotal articles supporting this view.

“Infertile men will often feel like less of a man for not being able to produce offspring. For many men, fathering children lies central to their identity and role within the family structure and community.” (Legg, 2017a, p. 107)

This text further reinforces that discursive link between a man’s ability to father children and his masculine identity with others and his wider community.

The discursive representation of male fertility is that all men should be able to father a child. If the man is incapable, then there are strong emotional and social consequences for the man. His gender identity and self-esteem is affected, leading to feelings of anxiety and stress. The man also feels that he is not fulfilling his role in society and his community by being unable to become a father. *Men’s Health* would like their readers to solve their fertility problems through healthy living and an active lifestyle.

**Discourse: Fatherhood.**

(Legg, 2017a).

“A man’s life moves in many directions but its compass always recalibrates back to this: the path your father paved before you.” (Okes, 2017, p. 96)

This text is from a well-known retired rugby player discussing his role as a father and his experience of his own father. He talks about how the path a man takes through his life is predetermined by what his father had accomplished and set out before him. This discourse of patriarchy is a common theme among all texts in this publication where fatherhood is discussed.

“I think it is every young boy’s dream to be like his dad when he grows up. I am definitely one of those boys.” (Okes, 2017, p. 96)

This discourse links to the previous notion that fathers predetermine a man's path in life. Here the father is seen as the primary role model for a young boy. This assertion is motivated by a general statement that discounts the role or influence of the mother.

“Where most dads might describe themselves as harassed, hoarse or haggard, Robert du Preez Snr opts for one word: blessed.” (Okes, 2017, p. 96)

The discourse shifts from focusing on the more patriarchal aspects of fatherhood to one of nurturing. The text implies that most men are ill-equipped to cope with the task of childrearing causing them to be “harassed, hoarse or haggard” but here the subject of the article brings up the discourse that having children is a blessing.

“...regular paternal input is critical in raising confident, socially adept adults. Fathers have the ability to boost everything from their kids' cognitive development to their physical and emotional wellbeing just by being around as they grow up – but an active hands-on approach pays even dividends.” (Okes, 2017, p. 98)

This text takes on the role of the knowledgeable expert providing factual motivation for the reader and encourages prospective fathers to take a more involved and active role in their children's upbringing.

“The father-son relationship is critical to satisfying the child's need to be stimulated, to overcome limits, and to learn to take chances in the context in which the child is confident of being protected.” (Okes, 2017, p. 98)

This quotation is another example of motivational fact giving, with a focus on raising male children. Nowhere in the article, or even in the entire sample, was the raising of female children discussed. The act of raising girls is entirely left to the mother.

“From early on we knew that in order to succeed there would be things that we need to sacrifice. My dad did guide us in this respect, but also wanted us to take

responsibility for ourselves, and to differentiate between right and wrong.” (Okes, 2017, p. 98)

Here the formation of one’s moral compass is attributed to the paternal influence a father has on his son. As well as instilling the requirements for success.

“Every father feels compelled to teach his children the importance of being accountable for their actions, and every son experiences the urge to live to his old man’s expectations.” (Okes, 2017, p. 98)s

This text further reinforces the role of the father is forming his children’s morality and accountability. The text then further elaborates on how all male children feel a need to live up to their father’s expectations and the example they set for their children.

Throughout these texts of how the discourse of fatherhood is constructed, there is a clear focus on the importance of the paternal influence. The discourse asserts that the father predetermines his son’s role in life and sets a clear moral standard for his son to live up to. Further, the more a father is involved in the upbringing of his sons, the more well-adjusted they will be as adults. Using a role model, the act of childrearing is put in a positive light, showing the agenda of the publication for its readers to be more involved in their sons’ lives. Nowhere in the text is there a mention of female children or of the role of the mother; the mother’s role in childrearing is made invisible with a clear focus on a patriarchal superiority and the influence of a father on the sons’ development.

### **Discourse: Family second, goals first.**

“As time goes by, the Brit is finding it harder to juggle a full-time career, volunteering and a new family. With a young child he’s had to scale back his involvement...” (Legg, 2017b, p. 83)

This theme talks about how the effects of having a family impact the personal freedoms that a man normally enjoys. The discourse of having to sacrifice one's time for family is represented as the man being reluctant or even resentful.

"I used to get a call-out and quickly drop a message to my wife to say that I was going to go fight fires. Now I have to phone her and ask for permission. And then find out if granny can help look after my kid," he laughs. (Legg, 2017b, p. 83)

Here the wife is constructed as a controlling and restrictive influence. The freedom to drop everything for a call-out is now restricted by the responsibilities of having a child and family.

"Because I travel so much, I miss spending time with my wife, my daughter, and my Great Dane. So, I try to do my training very early in the morning, or allow myself a rest day on Sunday so that I can spend quality time with my family." (Nortje, 2017b, p. 44)

The subject of this text is away from home during the week and is very dedicated to his personal fitness so much so that he only allocates one day per week to family time. This no-compromise attitude of the family must adhere to my schedule is a common discourse throughout the text.

"I asked him if he has a current girlfriend and Eastwood pauses. 'Let's just say there is no girlfriend situation right now,' he says. 'I'm just keeping it light.'" (Flax, 2017b, p. 48)

This discourse is of not having any commitment in order to keep one free to focus on their career or goals, a girlfriend would just complicate his life.

This theme of family second, goals first analyses the discourse around how family restricts or limits one's personal freedoms to pursue a man's career or goals. Within the text,

partners and children are constructed as either a restricting influence or a burden, providing a limiting factor to one's pursuit of one's goals. Commitment is actively avoided so that men can be free to do as they wish.

### ***Discussion***

Throughout Part One of this analysis, the articles analysed were generally prescriptive, with the text presenting scenarios where a certain kind of masculinity is expected. Ideals of a military lifestyle, financial savviness, leadership and musculature are exalted. Several dominant discourses throughout the text were identified and together they construct a certain kind of masculinity: one where control over the self and others, mental fortitude, dedication, physical strength, risk-taking behaviour, dominion over nature, leadership, male fertility and being a strong paternal figure while also being free of family ties are deemed characteristic qualities of a man.

There is an idolisation of the warrior, with many articles featuring accounts from the military. The soldier is constructed as the epitome of masculinity and a hero, embodying many of the aforementioned discourses, with articles focusing either on how the reader can exercise to physically be as capable as a soldier or of soldier's accounts on the battlefield. There is a focus on their physical capabilities, as this is a physical health-oriented publication, with many how-to guides and exercise regimes given to the reader.

A common discourse amongst almost all articles is how physical strength and a muscular appearance is constructed as the primary characteristic of masculinity (Wamsley, 1999). This aligns with the agenda of *Men's Health South Africa* as it is a health and lifestyle publication. There are many articles dedicated to the exaltation of strength and the associated social power and standing that one assumes. With many articles and guides given to the reader to help them attain a physically strong body. *Men's Health South Africa* seeks a



homogeneity in body type with only bodies with a defined musculature deemed as masculine. Bodies of a different shape or weight to what is prescribed are seen as lesser and not assigned the same social worth. This discourse also excludes those who are not physically able - within a year's worth of publications there is only one article dedicated to the achievements of a disabled person, but they only have worth due to their athletic ability and would otherwise be ignored (Legg, 2017d).

Interestingly, counter to the usual discourse where weakness is derided, there is an embracing of the importance of mental health, with activities such as yoga and meditation advocated as tools to overcome anxiety and stress. There is also a focus on fatherhood and the importance a good father can have in the upbringing of male children, but no mention is made for female children or the role of the mother.

Overall, *Men's Health South Africa* constructs masculinity in a way that is generally aligned with the traditional representation of hegemonic masculinity as outlined by Connell (2005) and can be considered to be complicit with the expression of hegemonic masculinity, with deviation on the discourses of mental health and fatherhood. This deviation could be due to a shift in the perceived importance of these issues with traditionally feminine activities such as yoga and meditation being adopted and constructed as non-threatening to the masculine image.

## **Part Two**

Part two of the analysis aims to answer the second research question: How do talk of role models and discourses of competition and conflict function in relation to masculinity? Within this section, the analysis will focus on individuals as they occur in the text and perform a close reading of articles featuring an individual deemed to be a role model. The discourse within the text will be examined as it emerges from the reading.

*Discourse: The role model, a real man!*

**The Smoke Jumper.**



(Legg, 2017b, p. 82)

“The remnants of the blaze still burned hot against his face. He took a deep breath, smell of smoke filling his nostrils and lungs as the billowing puffs of a doused fire rose up towards the brightening sky behind him. For the first time that night Richard Stubbs had a moment to take in his surroundings.” (Legg, 2017b, p. 82)

“After completing his fire training, he was put to work: his first foray into the smouldering battlefield unfolding on the mountains above Hout Bay.” (Legg, 2017b, p. 83)

“Fortunately, Stubbs is an avid runner who has completed numerous Two Oceans Ultras, a passion that would keep him fighting fit as he received back-to-back calls to arms.”

In these quotations, Stubbs is discursively positioned as a hero who volunteers to fight fires. The act of hiking up mountains in extreme conditions wearing heavy gear and carrying equipment to extinguish fires is constructed as manly. In addition, Stubbs’ ability to complete these tasks is due to his competitive nature, with the article expounding his credentials in having completed multiple ultra-marathons. It follows that the act of climbing up mountains to put out fires becomes a battle between the elements and man – an act of control. Stubbs enjoys this logistical challenge claiming that it activates a side of his thinking that is not normally utilised by him – and by association the reader – in everyday life.

### **The Rescuer.**

“His limbs were starting to cramp up and his strokes were steadily losing power. He was vomiting into the foamy surf as he broke the water’s surface, and he knew he was at his breaking point. His body wanted to stop, but he couldn’t. ‘There was a life on the line’....” (Legg, 2017b, p. 85)

“His favourite hours are those he has spent “selflessly”, he says. ‘Well, not entirely selflessly. I get so much out of volunteering. I give my time, sure, but I learn about myself – more and more every time I put my life on hold and challenge myself.’” (Legg, 2017b, p. 85)

“‘Knowing that what I do now could help me save someone’s life down the line – that keeps me motivated.’” (Legg, 2017b, p. 85)

Here a dramatic opening sets the tone of the article, man vs. nature, with man pushed to the limits of his ability to save lives. This discursive tool positions the subject of the article – a sea-rescue swimmer – as heroic. This heroism is framed in a way that is achievable by the reader, one needs only to volunteer one’s services and keep in shape and they too can be in a position to rescue someone in need.

### **The First Responder.**

“Moses Ngomane wakes up every day knowing that he will have to walk the tight rope of saving somebody’s life. His decisions tip the scale: they can buy precious seconds or lose countless more.” (Legg, 2017b, p. 87)

“‘It was traumatic’, he says, glossing over the details of some of his more harrowing experiences.” (Legg, 2017b, p. 87)

“‘Saving a life is a very satisfying feeling’ he says. ‘It’s something that’s difficult to describe.’” (Legg, 2017b, p. 87)

Operating under challenging conditions and with the high stakes of lives at risk, Moses embodies a brand of masculinity that overcomes challenges and suppresses trauma in order to fulfil one’s dreams and save lives.

These role models are all heroically positioned in such a way as to inspire and motivate the reader. While not traditionally competitive or combative figures, each is situated in a position of extremely challenging conditions and risk, with high stakes. All are able to overcome the challenge through physical and mental competency which is discursively positioned to inspire the reader – to, firstly, emulate their particular brand of masculinity, and

secondly, to adhere to their physical fitness standards as through that heroism becomes accessible to the reader.

### **Fit to Lead.**

“Karsten Wellner’s most powerful leadership tool is in his backpack... [he] believes that good leaders lead by example, which means he makes his health and fitness a priority – no matter where in the world he might be.” (Nortje, 2017b, p. 42)

“‘There is no question that your health affects your whole outlook on life. If you feel good about your body and yourself, you feel happier, and you don’t mind going the extra mile at work...’” (Nortje, 2017b, p. 43)

“‘Knowing that you are fit also gives you the mental endurance and physical ability to push yourself further than you would normally. I can think more clearly and feel younger when my body is healthy.’” (Nortje, 2017b, p. 43)

“‘It’s amazing what you can achieve with your body, if you have the mental strength to match your fitness.’” (Nortje, 2017b, p. 44)

“‘Being fit isn’t everything. You need to be happy to be truly healthy; and my family is my greatest source of happiness.’” (Nortje, 2017b, p. 44)

‘Good leaders lead by example’. This quote is indicative of the agenda of this text. Success is discursively positioned to be a result of physical fitness with the act of pursuing one’s fitness taking precedence over all activities other than one’s profession. Karsten, a successful CEO of a health company, models this behaviour to an extreme extent, dedicating time to exercise every day. Karsten reports the benefits are worth the effort, with being physically fit said to result in feelings of youthfulness, health, and mental fortitude. This discourse of physical fitness ties into a representation of masculinity that values the degree of physical fitness and strength one exhibits and is used to determine how much masculine one

is. It is noteworthy that this article is from a series of articles titled *Role Models*, the reader is clearly meant to take inspiration from the focal subjects and incorporate the behaviours into his own life.

**Build your way up.**

“He’s the CEO of a multimillion-rand, multi-award-winning property development company, yet the most important hour of his day is spent sweating it out with guys half his age.” (Nortje, 2017a, p. 46)

“The one thing I have learnt is that no matter how good a businessman you are, the physical aspect of your life is just as important as anything else when it comes to making a success of your life.” (Nortje, 2017a, p. 46)

These two quotations set up the theme of the article, mainly that there is a successful business leader for the reader to model who spends his free time exercising. And being physically fit will lead to success in other areas of the reader's life.

“For Paul, there is absolutely no question that his regular workouts boost his energy levels and help him focus when he’s managing the many varied aspects of their business. “It is fundamental to maintain a balance between working hard and physical exercise – the success of both is inextricably linked to the other”, he says.” (Nortje, 2017a, p. 46)

“It was only when he started pushing himself physically in the gym that Paul realised the impact that his health had on his overall wellbeing. “I wouldn’t say I was depressed before, but my low mood was definitely symptomatic of my health.” (Nortje, 2017a, p. 46)

Paul models the discourse that physical fitness will lead to an increase in mental faculties and emotional resilience.

“For five years I haven’t had a chocolate, any sugar, a glass of wine – nothing. The benefits of being in peak condition so outweigh any treats that I don’t miss them anymore. Even my sweet tooth for Swiss chocolate has faded.” (Nortje, 2017a, p. 46)

Being in ‘peak condition’ requires sacrifice. A sacrifice of time and pleasure. Paul models the behaviour of no compromise; he does not allow himself any foods that would jeopardise his fitness and adheres to a rigorous gym schedule. All of which purportedly contribute positively to his mental and physical conditions and the success of his business.

This article builds on the discourse that physical fitness leads to success. The role model of Paul, the successful CEO who gained his success in business through a rigorous fitness regime, is used to inspire and motivate the reader. The article has a subtitle of *Fitness Equity*, implying that this level of success is available to all. The word equity is associated with investing; it follows that if the reader invests in this kind of lifestyle, he will reap the same benefits as those to whom they aspire.

### **Son of a Gun.**

“... the 31-year-old actor nods and begins to describe what he calls the Eastwood Code. ‘Yeah, it’s actually a thing,’ he says, before itemising a few elements of the family guidelines. ‘Whatever you’re doing, you try to do your best at it every time. Just do it and then move on. You don’t ever backstab people or fuck anyone over – you don’t have integrity if you do that. You show up on time for stuff. And you don’t bitch and complain about what you’re doing.’” (Flax, 2017b, p. 48)

This article is an interview and observation of a Hollywood actor. He is discursively positioned in such a way by the author to give the reader insight into his thinking, attitudes and lifestyle.

“In the same vein, the elder Eastwood pushed his son to get serious about eating right and working out. ‘My dad is a machine about exercise. He showed me how to lift when I was 14 or 15 – he gave me some advice, then left me to do it on my own.’”

(Flax, 2017b, p. 48)

“...but if you don’t take risks, you’re gutless. And that never got anybody anywhere.”

(Flax, 2017b, p. 49)

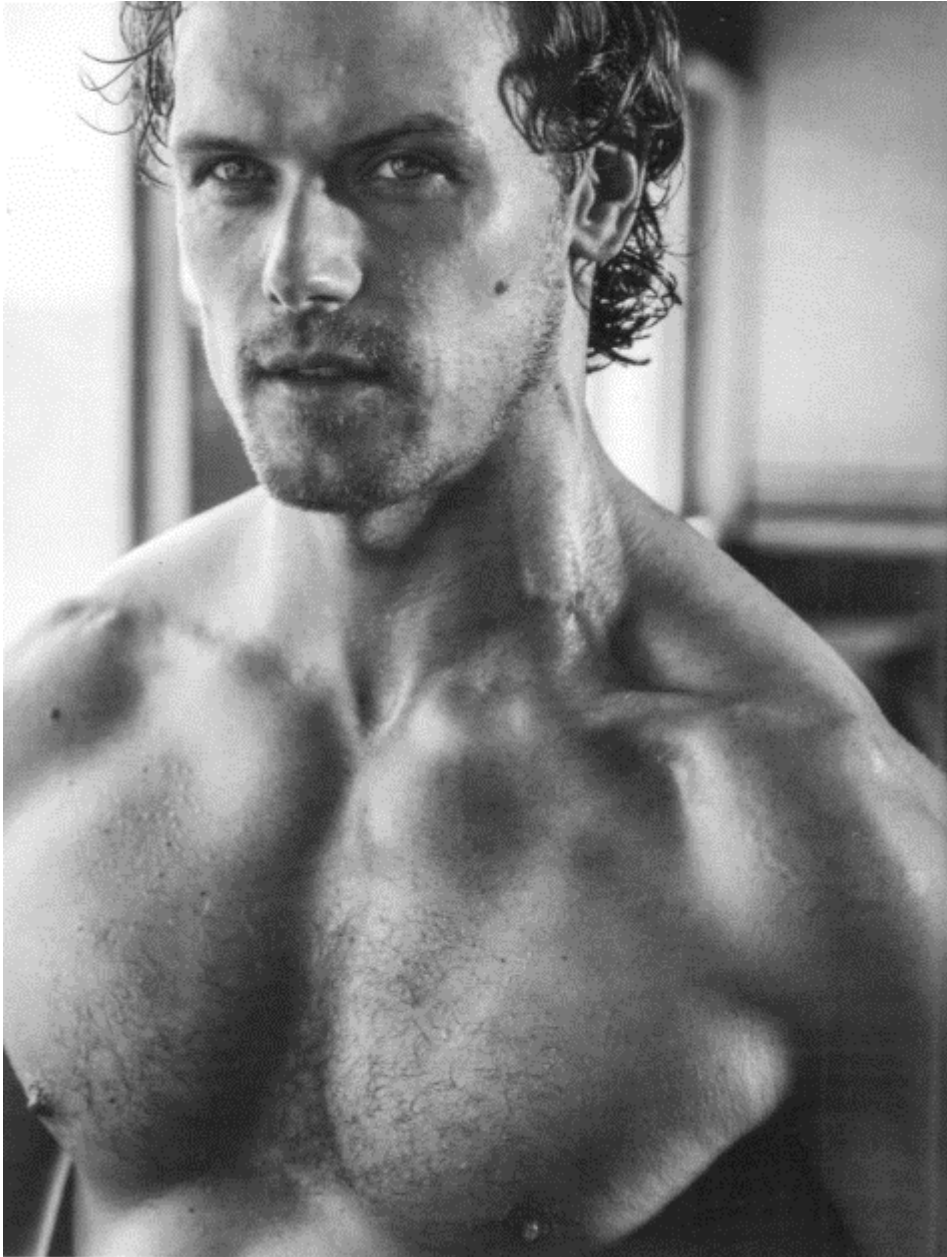
This section of the article is particularly prescriptive of the kind of masculinity expected to be modelled by the reader. Particular emphasis on ‘do it on my own’ and ‘if you don’t take risks you are gutless’ exhibit a discourse of masculinity that is independent and prone to risk-taking.

“The less I judge myself, the happier I am,” he says. “I’m not interested in being remembered as a rich, successful actor. I want to be remembered as someone who did what he loved and who affected people in a positive way. Not much frightens me, but thinking I won’t impact people in that way scares me to death.” (Flax, 2017b, p. 49)

The concluding passage to the article contains interesting discourse around legacy and wanting to make a difference to others. Before this passage, the text was focused on the self and how to get ahead, but this passage addresses legacy and wanting to have a positive effect on others with the associated anxiety that arises when there is fear that that won’t occur.

The article, *Son of a Gun*, focuses on the discourse of prescriptive masculinity; the subject is positioned in the text as a person of influence whom the reader may aspire to emulate in their day-to-day lives. With attitudes around how to behave, eat, exercise and treat others, all addressed.



**Rebel with a Cause.**

(Legg, 2017e, p. 92)

“He brings the weighted ball crashing down, burying it in the ground with a muted rubber thud as it meets the mat. Before it’s even settled, he’s already scooping it up again, repeating the exhausting move in a steady, unrelenting rhythm. Sam Heughan has ferocity on tap.” (Legg, 2017e, p. 92)

“Sam is sitting on a box taking a breather between brutal sets of pull-ups, dips, box jumps, push-ups and 20-calorie stints on the assault bike. Most guys would be flopped out on the ground, working through a burgeoning vocabulary of expletives ... but dancing on the breaking point is exactly where Sam wants to be....” (Legg, 2017e, p. 93)

“But Sam wasn’t without his issues. It might sound bizarre, but his biggest problem was that he was going too hard. He cracks a smile on his way to the power rack. ‘I’ve always gone as hard as I can’ he says. ‘I look forward to it. But with the intensity of these sessions, I was hurting my recovery when I hit the trail.’” (Legg, 2017e, p. 93)

Sam is used to model peak physical strength and performance to the reader, with an extreme workout used to illustrate his fitness and endurance.

“‘Active recovery doesn’t mean you have to run yourself ragged’, he says. ‘It could mean going for a walk and grabbing a coffee with your friends. That was a real eye-opener for me, that had big results.’” (Legg, 2017e, p. 93)

Juxtaposed with the first section of the article, this section walks back the macho masculine discourse in favour of a more tempered approach, giving the example of an achievable recovery that is accessible to most of the readers.

“He credits his upbringing for his passion for the great outdoors.... his home opened up to kilometres and more kilometres of wild, lush and enticing Scottish countryside – nurture an adventurous spirit...” (Legg, 2017e, p. 93)

“...his mother brought him up on a strict diet of healthy, home-cooked food. ‘It helped me not crave bad food, and I seriously believe that you are what you eat’, he says. ‘You put enough good stuff in your body, and eventually that’s what you’ll be seeking out.’” (Legg, 2017e, p. 94)

This section brings up the discourse on how men should be the outdoors type and the value of home-cooked meals.

“Taking on new challenges is central to Sam’s belief system. It’s something he wants to share with the world through his initiative, My Peak Challenge.... ‘It doesn’t matter what it is,’ he says. ‘Seriously, it can just be going for a walk or taking the stairs – that’s what we’re trying to communicate.’” (Legg, 2017e, p. 96)

Sam is discursively positioned as a role model for the reader, modelling, first, extreme physical ability to the point where it is noted that he goes too far and is in danger of hurting himself. This reinforces the discourse of a macho masculinity that deems physical ability and pushing oneself to the extreme. Secondly, slightly in contradiction to the previous discourse, a call to temperance and encouraging others to do what they can within their own abilities. The purpose of this article is to build up Sam as a figure of inspiration and for the reader to want to attain his level of physical ability and appearance. Given that this is unobtainable for your everyday reader it then gives the reader an obtainable goal, or encouragement, through Sam’s My Peak Challenge. Where the reader is tasked with doing any activity, even as simple as taking the stairs, as long as they are doing something physical.

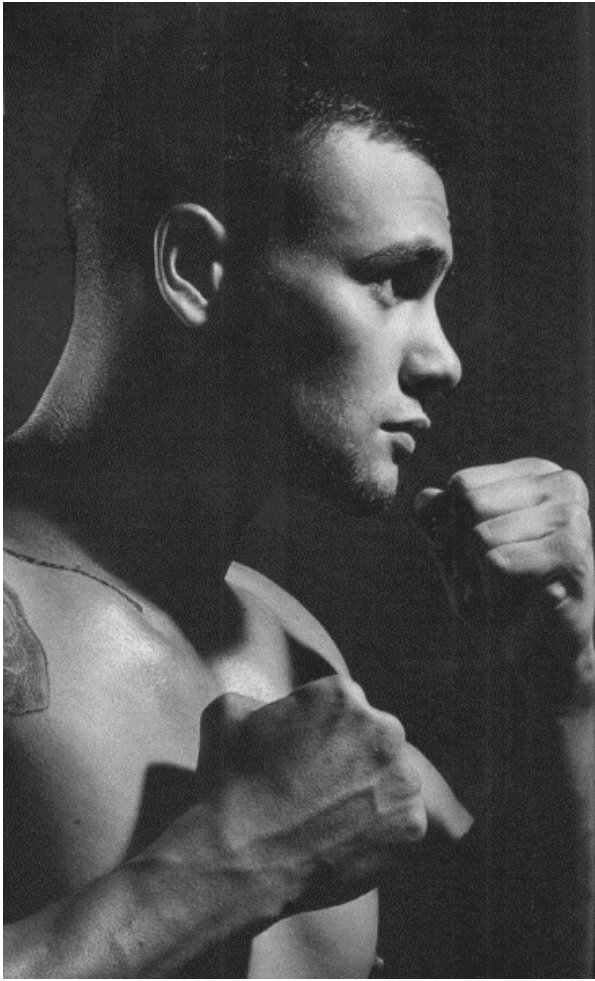
### ***Discussion***

The use of role models is prevalent throughout *Men’s Health South Africa*. All articles involving the use of a role model have a clear agenda of encouraging the reader to emulate the type of masculinity on display – invariably the role model is physically able, and their level of physical fitness and ability is correlated with success in other aspects of their lives, be it financial or business success. This interpretive repertoire, that physical fitness equates to success, is repeated no matter the kind of role model used, be it a CEO, actor, or volunteer firefighter. The use of role models to prescribe ways of being masculine to the readership of

*Men's Health South Africa* is a form of internal hegemony where the publication dictates acceptable ways of being. In that this version of masculinity within the pages of *Men's Health South Africa* is seen as the best and only way one should behave and act to be considered masculine (Demetriou, 2001). The profile of the role models is generally that of a white male businessperson or actor. The only role models of colour were the paramedic and volunteer sea-rescue swimmer, both belonging to a lower socioeconomic group. Within the sample, hardly any female role models were used.

***Discourse: Competition with others and the self***

This section will examine the discourses of competition as they occur in the text. The competition can either occur as interpersonal or intrapersonal and is used as a vehicle of self-improvement. The analysis itself will take the form of a close reading of individual articles discussing the discourses that arise and their implications for how masculinity is represented within the publication *Men's Health South Africa*.



(Brodie, 2017, p. 75)

### **Fighting Fit.**

“... that’s where the truly elite fighters come into their own: they’re athletes first and fighting machines second. They train six days a week.” (Brodie, 2017, p. 75)

“Every action, every routine is a choice – designed to condition, build fitness, develop stamina, strengthen the mind and to groove the movement so perfectly that, when they have to deliver exactly the same performance under pressure, their body is able to do it without hesitating.” (Brodie, 2017, p. 75)

The discourse of the body as a machine is elicited here in the context of routine and conditioning, which has a likeness to maintenance. Emphasis is put on the fact that fighting,

in this case, boxing, is an athletic ability. This detracts from any negative connotations around the violence of the sport.

“... the fresh-faced boxer is one of the world’s top cruiserweights. He’s ranked second in the world by the WBO, and 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> in his weight division by the WBC and WBA, respectively. Lerena has won 17 of his 18 professional bouts.” (Brodie, 2017, p. 76)

“‘ When you become a pro, you’re not there for three minutes of fame. You’re on your feet for 12 rounds,’ Lerena says. ‘And that means you have to train for 24.’” (Brodie, 2017, p. 76)

This passage establishes Lerena’s credentials as a consummate boxer and shows his dedication to the sport with a further discourse on training and how physical fitness sets one up for success.

“Now, as he enters his seventh year as a professional, he’s facing a new challenge: a winning streak. ‘Winning is very difficult’... ‘Winning is fatiguing – mentally, physically. When you get to the top, that’s when the real training starts.’” (Brodie, 2017, p. 76)

“At this stage of the game, it’s really all about discipline and routine – even a great technique is only as good as what you’re able to produce under fighting conditions.” (Brodie, 2017, p. 76)

“For me, performance is everything. If your performance is up there, everything else will fall into place.” (Brodie, 2017, p. 76)

“My goal when I’m training is to push myself to my limit. And then I push harder. That way I know in a fight I’ll always be able to push myself through.” (Brodie, 2017, p. 77)

“If there is something you can’t do, your opponent will use it against you.” (Brodie, 2017, p. 77)

Here the article explores the mindset and pressures of winning and what toll that takes on the athlete. The discourse that physical fitness leads to success is identified through the boxers’ increasing the intensity of their training to maintain their winning position.

The main discourses identified in this article revolve around competition in the form of fighting others with a focus on winning and how physical ability and fitness allow the fighter to win. The inherent violence of the sport is deemphasised with it hidden behind the statistical figures of wins vs. losses. The discourse of warrior ideation is also prevalent with the aim of the article to glorify boxing and the physical training required by the fighters to compete and win.

### **Wilder Crazier Faster.**

“It’s true that hypothermia and dehydration can cause hallucinations. But I was not fever-dreaming the animal noises emanating from deep within my friend and partner in adventure.... A little over halfway through our 46km midsummer quest to etch our names on the leader boards of a website known as Fastest Known Times – FKT for short.... I resisted the urge to inquire if [my friend] might possibly retch faster. We were, after all, on the clock.” (Murphy, 2018, p. 110)

“The pursuit of these trophies (Fastest Known Times...) represents an increasingly popular vocation... While they’ve been around in various forms for decades. FKTs have gained currency in recent years as people swap out official races and undocumented hikes for glory in the virtual realm. FKTs are at once old-school and new wave, scratching our itch for solitary adventure even as they grant us admission into a vast masochistic society.” (Murphy, 2018, p. 111)

This article focuses on an oblique sort of competition: competition against time. Here doing a solo sport such as hiking, running, or cycling can turn into competition without being part of an event. Hundreds of people could be competing against each other in isolation all through an app. The interaction between the author and his friend are also of interest, in the context of this competitive environment the author exhibits a macho masculine discourse, rejecting any display of weakness for his friend who is in physical distress.

“... emphasised the middle word when he referred to his and other’s Fastest “Known” Times. ‘It was intentional,’ he explains, ‘to pay homage to the people who came before, to leave the door open to the possibility that they were faster...’” (Murphy, 2018, p. 112)

“... ‘not really the gist’ of FKTs. That essence, he believes, ‘is your local hill, your local forest, your local beach...’ It’s about creativity rather than following someone else.” (Murphy, 2018, p. 112)

“For guys jonesing to compete – against others or themselves – FKT and Strava have weaponised every trail, road, and park across America and beyond. You can set FKTs or KOMs [king of the mountain] for entire runs or hikes, or for segments. Consider: 879 609 cycling attempts have been made on the 1.7km East Side Straightway in Manhattan’s Central Park. The KOM time as of 1 August 2017 is two minutes, seven seconds.” (Murphy, 2018, p. 114)

A key aspect of fastest known times or apps like Strava is that it has almost universal accessibility to anyone who possesses a smartphone; nearly any activity can become a competition. The reader is subtly encouraged to participate in this competition through its ease of access and popularity.



“Notching an FKT or Strava Kudo [like] ‘gratifies you in a way that’s very primal’, she says. ‘It’s a very boardroom mentality: ‘I want to be on top’. And for a lot of people, ‘I’m the best’. It’s a serious endorphin rush. You don’t get a lot of opportunities to feel that.’” (Murphy, 2018, p. 114)

The boardroom is traditionally a masculine-dominated setting and one that will potentially resonate with the reader. Success, being on top, winning, are all common themes of how masculinity is represented in the context of competition.

“We rested a lot, establishing an admittedly vulnerable FKT. But that doesn’t matter. The point, in truth, was to find some pretext to be out on the trail for a good chunk of time with a great friend. In other words, to enrich that friendship with yet another sublime sufferfest meaningful only to us.” (Murphy, 2018, p. 114)

Here the author reflects on how the act of shared competition between him and his friend brought them together in a shared experience. This discourse of bonding over adversity has an interesting implication for how masculinity is represented in this article. At first, the author was derisive of his friend, encouraging him to recover as quickly as possible with little regard to his wellbeing. This aligns with the usual representation of masculinity, which focuses on the individual’s self and performance or success above all; however, the author proceeds to discuss how their shared experience and their mutual suffering brought them greater emotional intimacy and strengthened their friendship. This modelled behaviour inspires the reader to also partake in the competition of a pursuit of a fastest known time with a friend to seek that comradery and status of topping the charts.

## The End of the Earth.



(Nicholson, 2018a, p. 102)

“Every November, across the country, 500 ultra-runners quietly leg it from their usual lives.... There’s a flurry of anxious texts: are conditions going to be too extreme this year? Hypothermia? Avalanches? A chorus of notifications in reply: ‘We’re still running’.” (Nicholson, 2018a, p. 102)

This article describes the athletes who have escalated from the already physically demanding sport of marathon running to the extreme distances of ultra-marathons.

“We want to see if we can do it”, said runner after runner, with glinting eyes. “We want to go to a harsh, tough place, push our bodies through pain, and conquer uncertainty”. These guys are the polar explorers of ultra-distance... hoping to find the end of the earth and make it back alive. (Nicholson, 2018a, p. 103)

“‘You’ve done a marathon, then the Ironman, then an ultra or two,’ ... “Each time you get to the finish, you think, *I can’t believe my body did that – I wonder if it can*

*do...this?* And so, you go to the next start. Or perhaps you think, *I wonder if I can do better?*” (Nicholson, 2018a, p. 103)

There is a prevalent discourse of pushing one’s limits in the pursuit of finding where those limits are. These athletes compete against themselves just as much as against the other race participants.

“But there’s not much point in being on the podium if no-one else really cares. Not much point in being all connected, without any spunk. So, every year, runners sign up for the SkyRun again and again.” (Nicholson, 2018a, p. 106)

The theme of this article is an encouragement to test your limits, not only against others in a competitive environment but seeking your limits in endurance and will power. The athletes are represented as ‘crazy’ or ‘madmen’ who accomplish these feats of extreme endurance and transcend their limitations. The discourse of triumphing over adversity and salvation through suffering and the race itself key into representations of masculinity where winning and enduring hardship are seen a masculine. Less emphasis is placed on the actual competition of the race and more on the achievement of crossing the finish line.

### **Why Every Man Needs a Great Rival.**

“... a rival is what pushes you to become stronger, faster, smarter and more creative. It what inspires us to be the one, ... ‘still running in the game.’” (Connif, 2017, p. 119)

This article has a clear agenda of relaying to the reader that a competitive relationship with someone of the reader's peer group is a good thing and that it is something all men should have.

“An entire generation, maybe two, has grown up under the classroom ideology that views individual reward as a ‘correlate of macho attitudes’, as one scholar puts it, ‘damaging to both intrinsic motivation and creativity’.” (Connif, 2017, p. 119)

“The shift in education to a learning style that’s arguably better suited to girls has made cooperation a major focus. But everywhere else in our lives, especially for boys and men, competition still rules.” (Connif, 2017, p. 119)

Here the author presents the discourse that traditional masculine rivalry and competitiveness is seen by society as negative and has been suppressed. Cooperation is seen as feminine and undesirable to the socialisation of boys.

“Understanding how to live with rivalries – when to cooperate, and when to compete, what’s a smart tactic and what’s stupid, how to use rivalry to boost performance...” (Connif, 2017, p. 119)

“Our recurring competitive bouts against known rivals ratchet up anxiety, excitement and also performance.” (Connif, 2017, p. 119)

The discourse that performance is king is again represented in the text, with rivalry seen as a way for the reader to perform better at his work and life and be a better man. Competitiveness and rivalry is constructed as a masculine pursuit with cooperation perceived as feminine and therefore lesser. The reader is encouraged to form rivalries with other men as competition is seen as something that is masculine and that it will improve one’s performance in contexts such as work.

### **From Zero to Hero.**

“How one flimsy hipster went from having never lifted anything heavier than a beer glass to holding his own in just 12 weeks.” (Legg, 2017c, p. 35)

“It was this inherent need most human feel, that we want to be strong, we want to be powerful. We want to transcend a lifestyle too easily and efficiently spent with our asses glued to chairs and our eyes glued to screens.” (Legg, 2017c, p. 35)

This article explores the journey of the author as they go through a fitness and strength regime. This keys into discourses of performance is king and that being physically strong is manly and gives one power.

“I felt weak in a myriad of new ways I didn’t think were possible. Lying in the foetal position on my couch I had flashbacks to my clumsy attempts at deadlifting, or my shaking false starts during a single set of bodyweight squats that left me sapped and defeated.” (Legg, 2017c, p. 36)

“I went there expecting a pack on plates like a sumo wrestler at a buffet and quickly realised this wasn’t a Rocky montage, this was a process. A tough, sweaty process.” (Legg, 2017c, p. 36)

The author realises that his journey of self-improvement is not something that will be over and done within a short timeframe and that it is not as easy as it appears in the movies. There is a theme of self-depreciation with words such as foetal, clumsy, shaking, sapped, and defeated used to perpetuate a discourse of weakness and the difficulty of the task.

“A few weeks in a David had upgraded me from ‘floppy cock’ status. (His words, not mine). Movements were making sense, and my deadlift and squat form no longer resembled a gyrating beanpole.” (Legg, 2017c, p. 36)

“... I had already noticed small changes. I was now thinking about how I moved... My posture was better, my grip strength had ramped up tremendously ... and I just felt healthier.” (Legg, 2017c, p. 36)

At the midpoint of the article, the author has started to make progress. Having been promoted from his ‘floppy cock’ status a term couched in toxic masculinity where weakness and sexual impotence is seen as un-masculine and derided.

“I also approached (most) of my sessions with excitement instead of dread ... the most important lesson I learnt: just show up.” (Legg, 2017c, p. 36)

“Sure, I don’t have washboard abs (yet) or front-row seats to the gun show (yet), but I’m stronger (a lot stronger) and I feel that newfound power everyday ... At the end of the day, it’s a big reward that’s easily worth the four hours of lost couch time every week.” (Legg, 2017c, p. 37)

The conclusion of the article sees the author feeling stronger and more masculine, even though they have not attained the musculature they desire, yet. The author's discourse has also started to become derisive stating that the benefits of becoming physically strong outweigh the loss of ‘couch time’. This encourages the reader to get off his proverbial couch and join in the pursuit of strength and the associated masculine validation brought by physical power.

### **Training Day.**

“On the day ... a perfect run and eighth position, he just wanted it to be over. ... After coming ninth in 2014 and then a disastrous 2016, Prodigal says he wanted gold more than anything.” (Nicholson, 2018b, p. 120)

“To win gold at Comrades last year, Prodigal Khumalo split in two. His mind divorced his body, and the severed pieces went to war.” (Nicholson, 2018b, p. 120)

The discourse of performance is king and winning at all cost even at the disregard for one’s health is prevalent throughout this article. Winning becomes everything and the athletes subject themselves to extreme training regimens in order to give themselves an edge over their opponents.

“These guys have to stay in the ‘fight zone’, and not let their bodies go into recovery”  
... “The brain wants to survive. Your brain will keep you in the fight zone for a lot

longer than anyone realises is possible. What we are doing feels superhuman to the athlete, but it's possible. It's brutal; but if you taper, your body goes into recovery, and you lose the psychological edge. It's dangerous to back off; you pick up niggles. You have to stay in the fight zone right up until the day of the race – if you want gold.” (Nicholson, 2018b, p. 121)

This part of the text puts emphasis on the discourse of performance and being in the ‘fight zone’. This term has connotations of conflict and competition and encourages a masculine mindset of needing to be on the offensive. The training disregards the athlete's wellbeing and keys into a masculine attitude of risk-taking or risking all for a perceived payoff.

“He knows the merciless training he went through at Dullstroom, only few can endure. When he goes into the fight zone, he makes comrades look like a parkrun; and he did the same at Ultra-Trail Cape Town last year, winning the event once again. Now the camp – and the cost – make sense.” (Nicholson, 2018b, p. 123)

Here the text asserts that the risk of the high-intensity training was worth the suffering it caused, relating his performance to a commonplace parkrun. This article has a clear agenda: for the purpose of winning and fostering competitiveness, the reader is encouraged to push themselves to greater lengths to achieve physical fitness. Discourses of performance is king and risk-taking, in the form of possibly harmful training regimens, are prevalent throughout the article, presenting a way of being to the reader for them to model.

Articles in this section focus on a journey of a subject, moving from an initial state of perceived weakness to one of strength achieved through exercise. The prevailing discourse being that it is masculine to want to obtain strength or the ability to win and that your life should be dedicated to achieving that goal. Specific discourses identified where performance

is king and risk-taking is manly. There is a prevailing theme of optimising performance and willpower – of wanting and needing to win. The texts encourage conformity to set standards of physical ability and wellbeing; through needing to win and being strong one will be perceived as masculine by others.

### ***Discussion***

Most instances of interpersonal competition occur in individual sports, such as running or boxing. This is most likely due to individual sports being easier to start for the readers, than committing to a team sport. The main discourses identified in this theme are warrior ideation, bonding over suffering, performance is king, triumph over adversity and winning is everything. There is a focus on rivalry, with claims that a rivalry between you and a peer will improve your performance in a competitive context or even in one's daily life. The concepts of rivalry and competition are constructed as a gendered concept with the act of cooperation seen as feminine and therefore lesser in the text; the male reader is encouraged to be competitive either in participating in sport, as modelled in *Men's Health South Africa* articles or through rivalries in the workplace. This is a form of extrinsic pressure which is seen as a motivating factor for competition between men (Conti et al., 2001). There is a general rejection of the feminine activity of cooperating to achieve a goal with the only concession made for when you may be competing with a friend but even then, the result takes precedence over any concern over the wellbeing of others. The reader is also encouraged to push his own limits in feats of endurance and increase his fitness level in order to improve his chances of success. The act of winning, setting a fastest known time and having a rivalry with another man is seen as masculine, and the competitive act affirms one's gender identity.



### **Part Three**

The analysis up to this point may have given the impression that each and every one of the articles published in *Men's Health South Africa*, across two years, drew upon and reinscribed one or other form of hegemonic masculinity. However, it is a central principle of Discourse Analysis, and indeed of qualitative research more generally, that in human affairs there always will be uniqueness and variety, and that, in the interests of reliability and validity, the analyst is obliged to seek out alternative discourses and deviant cases that emerge from the texts being analysed. Accordingly, Part three of this analysis explores some instances of such apparent deviance.

#### ***Deviant Case Analysis: My Badass Mom***

“Everything I know about being a man I learned from a woman.” (Easter, 2017a, p. 44)

“My mom got sober when my dad was in rehab ... With their shared source of misery behind them, my parents found calm, and my mom soon became pregnant with me. But five months in, my dad, at 29, decided the party wasn't over and that a pregnant, dry, drinking buddy was no drinking buddy at all. He walked out on his two-year marriage for good.” (Easter, 2017a, p. 44)

The opening statement sets the intent of the article. This is a disruptive discourse that states that gender socialisation does not necessarily come from the same-gendered parent, counter to the discourse of fatherhood previously identified. The description of the father is illustrative of the discourse that men avoid responsibility and neglect child-rearing.

“The American dream isn't so easy to find when you have two X chromosomes, an infant, and no help or degree.” (Easter, 2017a, p. 44)

“In our small town, where the nuclear, patriarchal family ruled and one religion dominated, Lynda stood out. She was a single mother, who not only worked but made good money, didn’t go to church, travelled the world and read 100 books a year. She was viewed by some as a beacon of hope and by others as a threat to the community.” (Easter, 2017a, p. 45)

“We felt the glances. People spoke in ‘poor you’ subtext. Certain kids weren’t allowed to hang out with me.” (Easter, 2017a, p. 45)

Here the text talks about the difficulty that face women, specifically single mothers. The author idolises his mother but acknowledges that their secular views and her independence were rejected by their community.

“The downfall of some fathers is that they are men, and men don’t ask for help. From my mother, I learned that not asking for help is self-centred. She recognised her weaknesses.” (Easter, 2017a, p. 45)

“As men, we think we can control everything. I now realise that it’s not only okay to be vulnerable, but that embracing your powerlessness is necessary for emotional and spiritual growth. It allows you to stop fighting when you know you’re beaten, and cures you of the notion that your way is the one and only way.” (Easter, 2017a, p. 45)

This text is counter to many of the discourses of masculinity. It openly advocates for acknowledging one’s weakness and vulnerability to overcome them and grow as a person. It also advocates for collaboration and recognition that one’s way of doing things is not necessarily the only way.

“People ask me what it was like to grow up without a father. I used to say I didn’t really know because I had nothing to compare it to. But I’ve come to realise my answer shows just how adept my mom was at creating comfort, stability, and

knowledge, pulling double duty as both mother and father. I now only say, ‘I have a really good mom’.” (Easter, 2017a, p. 45)

“When I try to understand the ultimate promise of my mother, I’m left with the idea that you need to bet on and strengthen yourself so that you can improve the lives of others.” (Easter, 2017a, p. 45)

This article speaks to the challenges faced by a single mother in a patriarchal society. It emphasises that male gender socialisation can still occur without the presence of a father figure, and that this can be advantageous in overcoming some of the limiting behaviours and beliefs associated with the male gender, such as never asking for help, deriding vulnerability, and believing that a man is always correct. This speaks to how gender is socially constructed, and, in this case, the author's sense of masculinity differs from that of others due to his upbringing.

### ***Discussion***

These two articles focus on two minority groups in society – the elderly and single mothers. The focus is on important lessons disruptive to the usual discourses of masculinity. These lessons are that social connections are as important as physical wellbeing (one should exercise in a way that is enjoyable and not focus only on results), and that acknowledging vulnerability and weaknesses is a step towards overcoming them and growing as an individual. These texts reinforce the idea that behaviour is socially constructed, with alternative ways of being acknowledged once there is a movement away from the echo chamber of men constructing masculinity between themselves.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter aimed to answer the two research questions of this dissertation, namely: How is hegemonic masculinity produced, sustained and resisted in *Men’s Health South*

*Africa* magazine? In particular, how does talk of role models and discourses of competition and conflict function in relation to masculinity? Several discourses were identified and interpreted and some deviant or alternative discourses that arose from the text were considered.

Masculinity is very clearly produced throughout the text of *Men's Health South Africa*. This occurs via various discourses, with the common denominator that activities involving physical ability and a muscular appearance are constructed as a primary pursuit of masculinity (Wamsley, 1999). Secondary to that, qualities such as good leadership, fatherhood, mental fortitude, and risk-taking behaviour, among others, are typical. Through the act or performance of exercising, becoming strong, being a good leader, having mental fortitude, dedication to a task, etcetera, one is deemed as masculine. Achieving this gives one social credit or power to then judge the masculine performances of other men and thus regulate the expression of the masculine gender (Butler, 2011). Men constantly compete and compare themselves to others, such as role models or leaders, in an effort to be more masculine.

With regard to how the use of role models function in relation to masculinity, there is a clear use of role models throughout the texts to exemplify various aspects of masculinity to the reader. Including leadership or the ideal body type and how the reader can emulate them. The role models tended to be white men of middle age, who could be deemed as influencers in their domains, such as actors, sportsmen or chief executive officers. Regarding conflict and competition, the findings were mixed and not quite as expected. Discourses involving competition tended to focus on individuals and solo sports such as running. There was extraordinarily little mention of group sports such as rugby, soccer, cricket, or others, which was surprising, given the South African context of the publication. Discourses of conflict were few and far between with more of a focus on idolising military figures and boxers for

their physical capabilities in endurance and strength, a finding that does align with the health focus of *Men's Health South Africa*. Competitiveness itself is seen as a characteristic quality of masculinity and the reader is encouraged to embody this behaviour to be considered masculine.

The next chapter will explore and discuss recommendations for future studies based on the findings above and conclude this study.

### ***Reflexive Considerations***

Coming to the end of the analysis, I can now again reflect on how my own subject position as a middle-class cis-gendered white man in my early 30s may have influenced the interpretation of the data. First, my own personal biases may have influenced the choice of which articles I extracted from *Men's Health South Africa* to analyse. While the articles were chosen based on whether certain discourses were present, articles that piqued my interest were far more likely to be chosen. In addition, there may have been unconscious influences such as choosing role models who are close to my demographic or who I as an individual could look up to. Second, my analysis and the conclusions drawn from the data will likely have been coloured by my own life experiences and ways of perceiving and interacting with others. In an ideal world, I would be completely impartial, and my analysis would only be informed by the theories presented in this study, but I do not believe it is possible to be a blank slate to that extent.

Another aspect to consider is how being immersed in the data and culture of *Men's Health South Africa* for the duration of this study has influenced me as an individual.

Needless to say, my biceps are much larger than when I started! I certainly am a lot more conscious of my health and body shape and size. Taking on these attitudes will have affected my analysis as I have a stake in the discourses under discussion.

Despite the issues I identified as to how I may have influenced the interpretation of data, and how that data has influenced me, I attempted to approach the data without preconceptions and through the lens of the theories defined in this study.

## Chapter Five – Conclusions and Recommendations

This study aimed to analyse the text found within *Men's Health South Africa* to discover discourses related to masculinity and how it is produced and influenced by talk on competition, conflict and the use of role models. The analysis produced a variety of findings, discussed in chapter four, some of which were unexpected – such as the general lack of any discourses around conflict or group competitiveness such as team sports. The normative social power of the publication was however expected. This influence is achieved through many different discourses and the use of role models. It aligns to the theoretical outlook of this study.

The rest of this chapter will discuss the limitations identified and provide recommendations for future studies, final concluding remarks and reflexing thoughts.

### Limitations and recommendations

A limitation of this study is that the sample size included only 12 issues of *Men's Health*. Increasing the sample size could allow for an analysis of how discourse changes over time. In addition, more than one publication could be analysed to investigate if there is a difference in how masculinity is represented in different publications.

The methodology could be adjusted to include a mixed media analysis of the data. There are many images, rich with meaning, that occur in the text that may be representative of many differing discourses that could provide insight into how masculinity is represented. Even a cursory glance at a magazine such as *Men's Health* should make it clear that if masculinity is indeed being constructed as one turns from page to page of a glossy publication such as this, then much of the constructive labour is being done by means of images rather than just words. In recognition of the key role played by images I included

some iconic photographs from the magazine in my presentation of the analysis. This mode of enquiry could of course be taken much further through, for example, a mixed-media analysis.

Additional publications such as *Gentleman's Quarterly* (GQ), *Esquire* or *Men's Fitness* among others could also be accessed for a more varied investigation into how the wider media represents masculinity. The ways in which masculinity is constructed in men's magazines could also be explicitly contrasted to how this occurs in general interest or women's magazines.

The researcher is a white male and as such is not always fully attuned to cultural discourses or modalities that are outside of my immediate frame of reference. Despite my efforts to be culturally sensitive and neutral in my analysis, the data has inevitably to some extent been analysed from a white male Western perspective. Greater depth to the analysis may be discovered if it had to be analysed from a variety of perspectives – such as that of an African or Asian male or the perspective of a woman.

### **Final reflexive observations**

Now that the study is concluded and the results are in, how do I as a man, who likely had my own particular masculine image influenced by this publication growing up, relate to the results? Through my own observations from my social interactions with others, I find the results largely unsurprising. To some extent, I think we all bow to some degree of social pressure, be it from peers, the media, or influential people in our lives. That pressure has a strong normative influence on how we behave, conduct ourselves, and interact with others.

What was unexpected was the lack of articles on team sports and discourses of group identity and competition or conflict between groups. This could have been due to *Men's Health* simply not being the publication that publishes many articles of that nature or journalistic trends within the period analysed.



In conclusion, this study highlights the need to be mindful of how one's behaviour is influenced. To be aware of the social pressures we are under and not to succumb to hegemonic ways of being that may not align to one's own self-identity or morals and to embrace other perspectives and unique individualities.

## **Conclusion**

This study aimed to answer two questions. First, how is hegemonic masculinity produced, sustained or and resisted in *Men's Health South Africa* magazine? And secondly how does talk of role models and discourses of competition and conflict function in relation to masculinity? In the process of answering these questions, a discussion of key concepts and an investigation into the literature was performed. Key concepts identified were gender, and more specifically gender roles and gender conflict, masculinity and hegemony. A review of contemporary literature involved an investigation of hegemonic masculinity, topics of competition, conflict, role models, and use of the media. Next, a discussion on the theoretical underpinnings of the study was conducted, which consisted mainly of social constructionism, critical social theory and Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. The next chapter discussed the methodology of the study, namely discourse analysis and its associated processes. The ethical implications of the study were identified and steps to ensure data reliability and validity were discussed such as deviant case analysis and reflexivity. The analysis of the data then proceeded, divided into various sections. First, an analysis of how hegemonic masculinity is represented in *Men's Health South Africa* was conducted with various prescriptive discourses identified, producing a clear production of hegemonic masculinity through the attainment of social standing through physical appearance, strength, and conforming to the accepted practices of the male gender. This standing then grants a social regulatory power which is used to police the expression of masculinity in others. Men constantly compete and compare themselves to others, such as their peers, role models, or

leaders, in an effort to become more masculine. Finally, an analysis of a particular deviant case was embarked upon for reliability and validity purposes, and it was tentatively concluded that it is indeed possible for somewhat non-conforming voices to find a place in a magazine that appears to be so relentlessly dedicated to locating itself within hegemonic masculinity.

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